THE UNBEARABLE HEAVINESS OF BEING: ABSURDITY OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN YUSUF ATILGAN'S AYLAK ADAM AND JULIO CORTAZAR'S RAYUELA

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis focuses on the theme of absurdity within the quotidian boundaries of life in Yusuf Atılgan's Aylak Adam and Julio Cortázar's Rayuela (translated as Hopscotch into English and Sek Sek into Turkish). Despite the linguistic, political, and social differences in the novels' backgrounds, striking similarities appear between the two protagonists—Aylak Adam's C and Rayuela's Horacio Oliveira. Both of these twentieth century literary characters are deeply affected by Existentialism in their conceptions of the world, or more specifically, of what is called everyday life. The shared notion of both is that accepting societal norms and abiding by the status quo is what makes each individual's life similar to the others'; in other words, to live like everybody else is to forgo one's individuality. For this reason, social institutions or acts such as marriage, having children, and/or working at a job turn life into a vicious, repetitive cycle, consequently rendering it absurd. I pay particular attention to C's idleness as an act of resistance to this uniformity, and how Cortázar's Oliveira, in a similar way, prioritizes his intellectual pursuits over social expectations. By making a comparative analysis of both works and eventually exploring how the existentialist flâneur perceives everyday life as absurd while he struggles to escape from habit, I aim to show how a Turkish and an Argentinian novel with completely different backgrounds can intersect through a universal anguish: existential dread.

ÖZET

VAR OLMANIN DAYANILMAZ AĞIRLIĞI: YUSUF ATILGAN'IN AYLAK ADAM VE JULIO CORTAZAR'IN RAYUELA ROMANLARINDA GÜNDELİK HAYATIN ABSÜRTLÜĞÜ

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KÜLTÜREL ÇALIŞMALAR YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, TEMMUZ 2019

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Anahtar Kelimeler: karşılaştırmalı edebiyat, varoluşçuluk, absürtlük, gündelik hayat

Bu tez Yusuf Atılgan'ın Aylak Adam ve Julio Cortázar'ın Rayuela (İngilizce'ye Hopscotch, Türkçe'ye Sek Sek olarak çevrilen) isimli romanlarında gündelik hayat sınırları içeresinde absürtlük teması üzerine yoğunlaşmaktadır. İki romanın zeminindeki dilsel, siyasi ve sosyal farklılıklara rağmen Aylak Adam'ın C'si ve Rayuela'nın Horacio Oliveira isimli ana karakteri arasında kayda değer benzerlikler gözlemlenmektedir. Bu yirminci yüzyıl edebi karakterlerinin ikisinin de dünyayı, özellikle gündelik hayat olarak adlandırılan alanı, algılama biçimleri Varoluşçuluk felsefesi tarafından derinden etkilenmiştir. İki karakterin ortak düşüncesine göre toplumsal normlara uygun olarak ve mevcut düzeni sorgulamadan kabul ederek yaşamak her bir bireyin yaşamını aynılaştırmaktır; diğer bir deyişle, herkes gibi yaşamak bireyin özgünlüğünden feragat etmesi demektir. Bu sebeple, evlilik, çocuk ve/veya iş sahibi olma gibi toplumsal kuruluş ve davranışlar hayatı kendini tekrarlayan bir kısır döngü haline getirerek absürtleştirmektedir. Bu tekdüzeliğe karşı bir eylem olarak C'nin aylaklığı ve benzer şekilde Oliveira'nın entelektüel uğraşlarına toplumun beklentilerinden daha fazla önem vermesi üzerine özellikle yoğunlaşıyorum. İki eserin karşılaştırmalı analizini yaparak ve sonuç olarak varoluşçu flanörün alışkanlıktan kaçmaya çabalarken gündelik hayatı nasıl absürt olarak algıladığını açımlayarak, Türkiye'den ve Arjantin'den tamamen farklı alt yapılara sahip iki romanın nasıl evrensel bir ıstırap olan varoluşsal kriz üzerinden kesiştiğini göstermeyi hedefliyorum.

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1. INTRODUCTION: EXISTENTIALISM IN THE PERIPHERY

> *"Pretender que uno es el centro […] es incalculablemente idiota. Un centro tan ilusorio como la seria pretender la ubicuidad. No hay centro, hay una especie de confluencia continua, de ondulación de la materia."*[1]

> *"Doğru, hep başkayız. Ayak bastığımız yer dünyanın merkezi oluyor. Her şey bizim çevremizde dönüyor…"*[2] [3]

The words above, the first uttered by Cortázar's existential (anti-)hero Horacio Oliveira in *Rayuela*, and the second by Atılgan's "idle" C, sum up the purpose of this chapter to perfection. Being mid-20th century novels, both in Cortázar's and Atılgan's works the imprint and influence of Existentialism is easy to recognize. A significant point is that Existentialism was, and is, considered to be a "European" movement, having sprung from the philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard, who was originally from Denmark, and reached its peak during the 20th century France. Although Cortázar was born in Brussels, he grew up in Buenos Aires, and Atılgan is known to have lived only in Turkey, thus situating both writers in what would be considered "outside" the center of Existentialism, into the periphery. Through the comparison of both texts, I also aim to focus on how existentialism was understood and put into practice in what is called the outside of the "center." As both philosophy and literature, particularly in the 20th century when Existentialism was at its peak and when these two novels were written, were more

[1] "To get the idea that you are the center […] is incalculably stupid. A center as illusory as it would be to try to find ubiquity. There is no center, there's a kind of continuous confluence, an undulation of matter." (trans. Gregory Rabassa)

[2] "True, we are always different. Wherever we step on, it's the center of the world. Everything revolves around us." (my translation)

[3] All the translations from *Aylak Adam* in this thesis belong to me unless otherwise stated.

Eurocentric, especially compared to the present-day—although it is still a debatable topic nowadays, as well. The quotations above, respectively from *Rayuela* and *Aylak Adam*, adequately reflect that this insistence of the presence of a "center" is overrated, and is, in a way, a social construction, created by the dominant who believes "wherever [they] step on" is "the center of the world." Of course, the main reason of the Eurocentrism of Existentialism is the recognition of 20th century French philosophers, such as Sartre, Camus, and Beauvoir, as the pinnacle of Existentialist (and Absurd) philosophy. Still, even though the word "existentialism" could be a European invention, the state of being that it refers to is universal, and as existential angst is felt and present in all beings, I believe it is significant to look into the periphery—in this case Turkey and Latin America—to acknowledge the effects of culture, language, and other social constructions on the understanding of Existentialism, and how it differs from the Eurocentric canon. In fact, Cortázar's claim that there is a confluence, or *confluencia*, rather than one rigid center seems plausible; while the theory might emerge in one place, through its flow it travels and finds form outside of the "center" as well. In fact, Edward Said's theory on the journey of theories is fitting. In "Traveling Theory" he asserts that "[l]ike people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel—from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another, […] the movement of ideas and theories from one place to another is both a fact of life and a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity." (Said 1983, 226). Through Said's claim, this confluence of idea takes a clearer shape; in both Atılgan's and Cortázar's works what we see is a reflection of the traveling of one or multiple theories, the main one being Existentialism. By means of this travel, the idea of the center is deconstructed, opening the way for the neglected itinerary of this journey, the periphery, rather than its starting point. Hence, one of the aims of this thesis is to glimpse through the effects of Existentialism "outside" the considered center and how it affected and shaped the lives, and therefore works, of both Cortázar and Atılgan, examining it through *Rayuela* and *Aylak Adam* by discussing the level of similarity between the characters of Oliveira and C and their creators at the same time.

It can be seen that even the way both novels start seems similar through their opening sentences: "All of a sudden, I realized that she could be among this crowd, on this pavement overflowing with people. My inner distress melted away." (Atılgan 2015, 9).[4]

[4] "Birden kaldırımlardan taşan kalabalıkta onun da olabileceği aklıma geldi. İçimdeki sıkıntı eridi."

"Would I find La Maga?" (Cortázar 2013, 3). A pivotal point might be the choice of words here. In the original Spanish version of the text, the word Cortázar uses for "find" is *encontrar*. This I believe is significant as it can both mean "to find" and "to encounter" or "come across," adding it a pinch of coincidence, as well. When we look into both novels, it can be seen that coincidence is a crucial part of both, as their search is also based on it. In *Aylak Adam*, C keeps looking for a woman he has never met, meeting others along the way, thinking they could be she, relying on not much more than coincidence. In *Rayuela*, Oliveira is in a similar search for his former mistress, La Maga, who, unlike C's woman, is known and appears in most of the chapters in the novel until her disappearance. Again, Cortázar's novel uses coincidence as a base; life is in a flux as it is not planned, and thus not certain. Precariousness, therefore, exists in both characters' lives, as a result of their rejection of habit. The main focus of my thesis is based on this rejection; I focus on the novels and the protagonists from three perspectives—as the existentialist, the flaneur/idler, and the refuser of habit, yet in fact all three are intertwined with each other, and are included in a continuous flow through a cause and effect relationship. The way I see it, it is the existential angst that fuels the need for wandering, or flanerie, and through the precariousness it creates emerges even a stronger dissatisfaction with uniformity and habit, assigning it the sense of absurdity. Thus, I separated each chapter into three parts for each novel and followed this pattern so as to create a linearity—which, ironically, is something neither C nor Oliveira seems to be in favor of in real life.

The second chapter of this thesis takes Yusuf Atılgan and *Aylak Adam* as its focus. The first part takes as its focus how existentialism was introduced and later understood in Turkey, and the way Atılgan became involved with it, inspiring the novel eventually. It continues with C the protagonist's own existential crisis, and how it makes an idler out of him, fitting the title of the book.[5] It draws similarities between the internal feud of Atılgan's characters and Sartre's novels, such as *Nausea*, as Sartre was a major inspiration for Atılgan—just like he was for Cortázar, as well. I mention Sartre's term "bad faith" to refer to the connection most characters have in the novel with comfort, accelerated by habit itself, and how this separates C from others in terms of freedom and self-awareness, building his loneliness at the same time. In the second part, I focus on the question of the

[5] *Aylak Adam* literally means "The Idler", or "The Idle Man". (*Aylak*: idle, *Adam*: man)

flaneur and the man of the crowd, first introduced by Walter Benjamin, and which one C's character seems to be closer to. As flanerie is associated with wandering, but also with search itself, I consider it as focal point to discuss C's search throughout the novel, and whether the search is for a woman as he claims to be, or if the woman is just a metaphor, after all. Moreover, I analyzed flanerie as a part of his idleness and a way for him to escape routine, as his seeking seems to be based on coincidence. The third part connects these themes to habit and how it is interpreted as absurd by the main character. There I utilize Camus' ideas on absurdity and Absurdism, mainly through his essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, to draw an analogy between Sisyphus' situation and that of the modern individual. Through this absurdity, C's suicide attempt, and oncoming madness, I propose the question of madness as an escape from habit, as opposed to suicide, which Camus proposes as a response to absurdity. Yet, as the reader never sees the complete realization of madness in the novel, the question remains open-ended.

The third chapter focuses on Julio Cortázar and *Rayuela*. Similar to the process in the second chapter, I aimed to create a pattern of existentialism–flanerie–absurdity, connecting all in the last part. In the first part, I introduce Cortázar as the "Latin American Intellectual" and delve into the periphery of the literary canon as even though he was born and lived in Europe for most of his life (which is not the case in the life of Atılgan, as he lived only in Turkey, for most of his life in a small village in Manisa), his Argentineness plays a pivotal role in the novel. Yet, Cortázar is not the only Latin American intellectual on display; Horacio Oliveira, the protagonist of *Rayuela*, is the other one. His intellectual self and his involvement with the Serpent Club, an intellectual group he founded with his bohemian friends in Paris where they talk about philosophy, music, art etc., creates the contrast between his Latin American intellectual self and his identity as an expat in Paris, very similar to the case of Cortázar, apart from the fact that he was in Paris as a part of his self-imposed exile and not as an expat. Through this intellectuality, one can also observe how the existentialist angst interlaces with his search—similar to C's, yet the fact that Oliveira is in Paris, the practical heart of Existential philosophy and that he is there in the 20th century, the time where the movement reached its peak, of course amplifies both the crisis and the search. The second part, therefore, focuses on flânerie and search, following the cities of Oliveira (and Cortázar): first Paris, then Buenos Aires upon his eventual homecoming. Flânerie as an act of resistance is embedded in this chapter, as well, to question the motives of search itself, and whether it could save one from the

excruciating pain caused by the monotony of habit and the absurdity of life. The last part connects the first two to the absurdity of daily life. It observes how absurdity is constructed and deconstructed through the novel and follows the similar pattern of suicide and madness in *Aylak Adam*. This I believe is significant as both novels are from the outside of what is considered the international literary canon, and it is a very low possibility that the two authors ever heard of each other before or after the time they penned their novels. This, therefore, brings out the claim that Existentialism, as a universal movement (and angst), led to similar conclusions in Turkey, Latin America, and other parts of the world.

In conclusion, I propose this thesis as a humble contribution to the study of comparative literature, especially to the study of the "periphery" and the comparison of Turkey and Latin America, which I think is overlooked in the area of comparative literature despite the many similarities the two regions share. Through this thesis, I aimed to show that two countries that are far away from each other and tend to be less in demand in terms of literary study compared to Europe and the United States, exhibit a connection through a universal subject such as Existentialism. Even though both Atılgan and Cortázar were unquestionably and naturally inspired by French Existentialists, they lived almost completely different lives and reflected these lives in their works; yet they still remained significantly akin to each other.

2. YUSUF ATILGAN AND AYLAK ADAM: THE (C)ONTRARY MAN OF TURKISH LITERATURE

2.1. The Turkish Existentialist: Atılgan and his Anti-Hero

Perhaps the first thing the reader should be acquainted with is that Atılgan's roots, unlike those of Cortázar, who was born in Brussels and raised in Buenos Aires, do not come from the city. He was born in Manisa, a city in the Aegaeon region of Turkey, in 1921, a year before her parents relocated—due to the burning down of the city, or in his words "after the Greeks burned down the city," (Yüksel 1992, 11) during the First World War—to a village in the same city called Hacırahman, where he ended up living for more than half of his life. Atılgan's having lived mostly in the rural is significant within the scope of *Aylak Adam*, a city novel. This of course does not mean that he is not familiar with city life, as he did reside in Istanbul for many years, coming for the first time to study literature at Istanbul University in 1939. Thus, while not excluding his years in the metropolis, Atılgan's attachment for and adherence to his hometown do affect his novels, including *Aylak Adam*.

When Yusuf Atılgan published *Aylak Adam*, his first novel, in 1959, Europe was convulsing with the sensational Existentialist philosophy, which, at that time, seemed to be dominated by French writers, names such as Jean Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Simone de Beauvoir strikingly standing out. With the publication of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* in 1943, the idea that "existence precedes essence" was becoming more and more widely known. In Turkey, however, Existentialism, or *varoluşçuluk*, began to gain more focus and attention after Nusret Hızır, a Turkish philosopher, published a couple of articles on existentialism in *Yücel*, a literary magazine, in 1956 (Direk 2001, 442). Jean Paul Sartre's work was first translated into Turkish in the late 1940s (Koş

2010, 54), effectually inducing the spread of existentialist thought within Turkish intellectuals. In fact, Hızır's writings mostly focused on Sartre's works, mainly *Being and Nothingness*, whose ideology Hızır interpreted as "being stuck in an anti-intellectual paradox" (Direk 2001, 443). The same year Peyami Safa, an acclaimed Turkish author to this day, also published his writings on the newly-introduced existentialist thought in a magazine called *Türk Düşüncesi* (Turkish Thought). Safa's approach, unlike Hızır's, was more critical. While Safa was in favor of Religious, or Christian, Existentialism rooted in Kierkegaard's ideology, he denounced Sartre's philosophy because it was based on godless existentialism, claiming that atheistic existentialism is an absurd philosophy as much as it is "the philosophy of the absurd" (Ibid, 445). The reason for this, according to Ayşenaz Koş, was that the ideas of Western existentialists were mostly apprehended as absurd in Turkey as a result of the disparity between Western and Turkish thought (Koş 2010, 44), Turkey still being a predominantly Islamic country at the time. However, at the time the main discussion of existentialist theory was not actually on the theory itself, but on its popular image (Direk 2001, 448), thus perhaps in Safa's criticism there lies an undisclosed panic about the spread of atheism through the popularized image of existentialist philosophy.

In terms of politics, 1950 was the beginning of a new party era; the right-wing Democratic Party came into power after the single party regime of the Republican People's Party of twenty-seven years (Lewis 1968, 315). This is significant in terms of the effects it had on the society; according to Walter Weiker, the multiparty period created a "religious revival" by appealing "openly to religious sentiments" (Weiker 1981, 105). Thus, with the weakening of secularism that rose during the single party era of the left-wing Republican People's Party, it does not come as a surprise that conservative approaches to Existentialism, such as Safa's, emerged.

From this perspective, there seems little doubt that Atılgan was affected by the overwhelming popularity of Existentialism at the time. He was a translator of Kierkegaard's work and his translation of *The Sickness unto Death* was among some of the pieces in *Yusuf Atılgan'a Armağan* (A Gift to Yusuf Atılgan), a book written and compiled by Atılgan's friends following his death.

Having leftist tendencies himself, Atılgan was among the ones jailed with the accusation of being an advocate of communism when he was still a literature student at university in 1945, fourteen years prior to the publication of *Aylak Adam*. His friend Turan Yüksel states in *Yusuf Atılgan'a Armağan* that he did not see post-incarceration Atılgan again after his ten-month sentence in jail as Atılgan went back to his hometown, Hacırahman, and Yüksel learned about his friend's activities only after the publication of *Aylak Adam* (Yüksel 1992, 24).

Considering the background of *Aylak Adam,* the fact that it revolves around a character struggling with existential angst is no surprise. Indeed, just like *Anayurt Oteli*[6]—Atılgan's second novel—*Aylak Adam* was also interpreted by scholars as an existential novel, following a 28-year-old moneyed "idler" called C through his search, as he calls it, for true love. The novel is divided into four chapters, one for each season: Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall, making the novel a reflection of a year in the life of C, the protagonist.

What C claims to be doing throughout the novel is looking for a woman, the love of his life, by walking through the neighborhoods of Istanbul, becoming involved in relationships with different women, and trying to escape the haunting of his past. C is no ordinary character; he refuses to live by the status quo as he has no job and has no intention of acquiring one in the future, and calls himself an *aylak*: "The woman asked, 'Don't you have any other business to attend to?' 'No, I am an idler'" (Atılgan 2015, 95).[7]

*'*Aylak' is one of those words whose full meaning becomes lost in translation. One could translate it as "idler" or "slacker," or a combination of both. It does, however, carry the connotation of solitude, or loneliness, as well, thus rendering futile the effort to reduce it into a single word in English. The Turkish Language Association (TDK) defines *aylak* as "(someone) who is unemployed, a slacker or a wanderer who roams aimlessly."[8] In the case of C, he is unemployed, yet it would not do him justice to call him a "slacker." As mentioned before, C does have an aim regarding his wanderings. What he claims to be

[6] Translated into English as *Motherland Hotel* by Fred Stark, City Light Books, 2016.

[7] "Kadın, 'Sizin başka işiniz yok mu?' diye sordu."
'Hayır, Aylakım ben.'"

[8] http://sozluk.gov.tr

looking for is a woman that he has not even met, who he believes will be able to give him true love. In fact, this is how the novel starts: "All of a sudden, I realized that she could be among this crowd, on this pavement overflowing with people. My inner distress melted away" (Atılgan 2015, 9).[9] However, I aim to debate in this thesis whether this or idleness is the actual aim of his search.

The first chapter, titled "Winter," follows the course of C's wanderings through the city. It begins with speculations about encountering the woman he is looking for, a woman whom he has never met, in the streets he keeps walking on. He reminisces about a fight he was involved in where he was beaten up by tailors, kisses a Greek (*Rum*) girl on the street, then goes to visit his painter friends (or perhaps acquaintances would be a more suitable term). He, then, eats at a restaurant and goes to the cinema to watch a movie, followed by a drink at a beerhouse. Another day, he goes to the studio of a former girlfriend of his, Ayşe, who is a painter, where the neighbors call the police upon his arrival and he is forced to leave despite having a key to the studio. The chapter ends with his encounter with a beggar who is smoking and hides the cigarette upon seeing C. Just to mess with him, C asks him for a cigarette, and when the beggar says he does not smoke, C fakes a pitiful voice saying he would pay two and a half *kuruş* (much more than it is worth) for a single cigarette and walks away. He decides to follow the beggar for a couple off streets, then changes his direction to the main street.

This can provide the reader with a spectrum of the quotidian doings of C, and glimpse into the reasons for his refusal of the status quo. Unlike a regular, standard individual of the society, C does not have a job. It becomes clear in the novel that he has inherited a couple of buildings and lives by the rents he collects from them, making it possible for him to eat and drink out every day without financial difficulties. Right after he meets his painter friends, they count out their speculations on what could have happened to C as they had not seen him for a while, and mention that they decided on the unlikely possibility that he found a job. C's response to this is positive; he remarks that he indeed found a job and goes on to explain:

> "Ever since I read that street sign named "The Street of the Two Orphans," I devoted myself to a business. I was going to collect street names and reflect

[9] "Birden kaldırımlardan taşan kalabalıkta onun da olabileceği aklıma geldi. İçimdeki sıkıntı eridi."

> on them. I worked on this business for three days; and quitted it in the afternoon yesterday. Each street I entered had that stoop shouldered man behind. Now, I am an idler once more. [...] I have been seeing different streets for three days, as well. There is one called "The Lion's Den," with a lot of curves. I wonder if once upon a time a lion settled in one of the corners and suddenly all the city came here to watch it, or whether what they called a lion was just a pompous vagabond. What about that street called "The Street of Rowed Cypresses" where you cannot encounter one cypress three: Asphalt, concrete buildings one after another, a flock of automobiles, a flock of fastwalking people… Did people walked like this when there used to be actual cypresses in this street, too?" (Ibid, 14)[10]

What C describes as a job is not what would usually fit into the category of a "normal" job. First of all, he receives no salary in return for his service, making it more of a "hobby" than an occupation according to many. Moreover, it is doubtful that his claimed job would even be considered as service when compared to occupations that are considered more productive and rewarding. Even painting, considered as a useless and unworthy occupation by many, strikes one as more acceptable. It can be seen how C indulges in the details of the quotidian that most tend to disregard or overlook, such as the connection he aims to find between the names of streets and the meanings behind them. As a result, he is not taken seriously by the painters, his attempted job being considered unsuitable and senseless, and he himself does not maintain it, going back to idleness. As he also refuses to stick by the mainstream, he does not believe in the existence of an occupation that would suit his ideals: "I am an idler, he said, I have money. Moreover, there is no job that I could do." (Atılgan 2015, 27).[11]

C's criticism of the mechanical workings of the society is repeated many times throughout the novel. Apart from avoiding occupational work, he is also cynical about people who go to work on a daily basis and turn it into an unavoidable part of human nature:

[10] Dört gün önce bir sokak levhasında 'İki Öksüzler Sokağı' adını okuduğum zaman kendi kendimi bir işe adadım. Şehrin sokak adlarını toplayacak, bunlar üstüne düşünecektim. Üç gün çalıştım bu işte; dün öğlen bıraktım. Hangi sokağa gitsem ardında hep o bir omuzu düşük adam vardı. Şimdi yine aylakım. […] Üç gündür başka sokaklar da gördüm. Bir 'Aslan Yatağı Sokağı' var, bol dönemeçli. Bir zamanlar köşelerden birine bir gerçek aslan yerleşti de bütün şehir onu seyre mi koştu, yoksa aslan dedikleri övüngen mahalle kopuklarından biri miydi? Ya o sonuna dek gidip de bir tek servi göremeyeceğiniz 'Sıra Serviler Caddesi': Asfalt, üst üste beton yapılar, otomobiller sürüsü, hızlıyürüyeninsanlar sürüsü… Bu yolun servili olduğu zamanlar da insanlar böyle mi yürürdü?

[11] "Aylağım ben, demişti, param var. Hem benim yapabileceğim bir iş de yok."

> "Who knows, perhaps if there was no such thing as boredom, people would forget to go to work. 'Work is a consolation', his father used to say. He wanted no such consolation. What they called work was writing, teaching, hammering, all in a uniform way. Even a driver that blows his horn in a different way, or an ironsmith who swings his hammer with a unique air would be repeating themselves a day later. The purpose of life was *habit*, was comfort. The majority was afraid of making an effort, of novelty. How easy it was to keep up with them! If he wanted, he could give lectures at a school during the day, and go to bed with silent, beautiful women at night. In an effortless way. But he knew: it would not be enough. There had to be something more." (Ibid, 41, my italics)[12]

For Atılgan's C, a job is an obstacle standing in the way of individuality. As he claims, no matter how different a person would try to do their job every day, it is bound to repeat itself at some point, turning life into one repetitive vicious cycle, and replacing individuality with uniformity. While habit, according to him, is the nightmare that drains the life out of people, for the ones abiding by the status quo it is what makes life easier to manage, giving them comfort as they become sure of what is coming next as a result of this repetition. Unlike those who refuse to provide room for change so as not to disturb the course of life ruled by habit, C rejects uniformity and repetitiveness by choosing idleness over work, believing there is more to life, something that would invest it with meaning, than the absurdity of habit.

The effect of Existentialism on Atılgan's work can be observed here. C is considered to be an existentialist (anti-)hero for his refusal to abide by the norms that provide meaning to other people's way of life. What he actually is doing by searching for "something more" is to search for meaning, the main conundrum of Existentialism itself. While challenging uniformity, C is intimidated by his own existential angst as well, questioning why he cannot be satisfied without looking beyond the quotidian boundaries as everybody around him does: "You all are comfortable. How easy it is for you to be relieved. Why can't I be like you, too? Am I the only one thinking? Am I the only one by myself?" (Ibid, 39).[13] This seems to bear many similarities to the

[12] Kim bilir, belki iç sıkıntısı olmasa insanlar işe gitmeyi unuturlardı. 'İş avutur,' derdi babası. O böyle avuntu istemiyordu. Bir örnek yazılar yazmak, bir örnek dersler vermek, bir örnek çekiç sallamaktı onların iş dedikleri. Kornasını ötekilerden başka öttüren bir şoför, çekicini başka bir ahenkle sallayan bir demirci bile ikinci gün kendini tekrarlıyordu. Yaşamanın amacı alışkanlıktı, rahatlıktı. Çoğunluk çabadan, yenilikten korkuyordu. Ne kolaydı onlara uymak! Gündüzleri bir okulda ders verir, geceleri sessiz, güzel kadınlarla yatardı istese. Çabasız. Ama biliyordu: Yetinemeyecekti. Başka şeyler gerekti.

[13] "Rahatsınız. Hem ne kolay rahatlıyorsunuz. İçinizde boşluklar yok. Neden ben de sizin gibi olamıyorum? Bir ben miyim düşünen? Bir ben miyim yalnız?"

famous novel of the existentialist writer Jean-Paul Sartre, whose works left a remarkable impact on both Atılgan and Cortázar: *Nausea*. Similar to *Aylak Adam*, *Nausea* was also Sartre's first novel, revolving around a French writer named Antoine Roquetin, who is appalled by his existence. While it cannot be said with certainty that C detests existing, he is as intrigued by life as Roquetin. In fact, Roquetin's entries in his diary in *Nausea* demonstrate perfectly how similar the two characters are: "I am alone in the midst of these happy, reasonable voices. All these characters spend their time explaining themselves, and happily recognizing that they hold the same opinions. Good God, how important they consider it to think the same things all together." (Sartre 2000, 19). A point Sartre takes care to show through Roquetin is that being in need of "something more," as in the words of Atılgan, creates a disparity between the individualist and the members of the society who revolve around habit and find comfort in it. While "hold[ing] the same opinions" seems to bring happiness to them, it creates the aforementioned uniformity at the same time, the very one that eradicates uniqueness, creating harmony through homogeneity. In a way, the uneasiness resulting from the discontent with the conventional way of life estranges the ones holding divergent opinions, like C and Roquetin.

Sartre claims in his *Existentialism Is a Humanism* that freedom is inevitable for human beings, whether they like it or not. While this seems to bear a positive connotation at first glance, the fact that freedom comes with a price, that is responsibility, becomes overwhelming. According to existentialist thought, existence precedes essence. In other words, unlike objects, human beings are created without a specific purpose in life. It is up to us, humans, to search for meaning and create our own purpose. The discussion of freedom therefore is relevant, as in the absence of a predetermined essence or purpose humans become free to act as they like rather than having to be chained to presupposed roles. Nonetheless, every action has its opposite reaction, and with freedom comes the burden of responsibility:

> "If, however, existence truly does precede essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, the first effect of existentialism is to make every man conscious of what he is, and to make him solely responsible for his own existence. And when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not

> mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men." (Sartre 2007, 23)

Thus, it can be noticed that existential angst, in a manner, serves to provide the individual with the consciousness of self. This can be observed in the case of C as he revolts against others for sticking by the ordinary, being well-aware that he thinks and feels and acts in a different way compared to them. In fact, he even claims he is the "only one thinking" after all, blaming the others for being oblivious to the real meaning of life. It is worth mentioning that even though he appears to desire to live like others at some point, asking angrily at himself why he cannot be like them, according to Sartre's thought he is free to adopt the "easy" way of living without mindfulness and thinking. Why then, even when he is severely irritated by his crushing self-awareness and loneliness, does he not follow that path? This is perhaps a challenging question without a straightforward answer; however, his self-awareness clearly withholds him from living in a standard way. All the comfortable, happy voices are so for a reason; they are unaware of a way of living that is outside of what they have become used to. Habit breeds comfort and inhibits the desire to go beyond the familiar and the convenient. Being self-aware, it is almost impossible for someone like C to become a "regular," undistinguished person and be content with it.

By stating that through action man becomes responsible for everyone else, Sartre believes that by choosing to realize an act, the individual creates a template for others. This is the reason why the burden of responsibility transcends selfhood, adding to one's existential crisis:

> "[…] if I decide to marry and have children – granted such a marriage proceeds solely from my own circumstances, my passion, or only desire- I am nonetheless committing not only myself, but all of humanity, to the practice of monogamy. I am therefore responsible for myself and for everyone else, and I am fashioning a certain image of man as I choose him to be. In choosing myself, I choose man." (Ibid, 24-25)

This can be applied to the case of C, not through his actions, but his inertia. Of course, idleness is not the same as inertia, and it is observed in the novel that he does not just lie around and expect his destiny to catch up with him, if he believes in one. He is on a constant search to encounter the true love he is looking for in the streets of Istanbul.

This inertia, hence, is the refusal of societal norms such as marriage and employment. It might conceivably be claimed that by rejecting work and/or a stable relationship, C tries to escape being burdened by others' responsibilities; still the lack of action is itself an action, making it impossible for him to elude responsibility for good.

Despite his refusal to stick to the status quo, the women C establishes relationships with have tendencies to desire to live by the norms he seems to criticize. Güler, whom C meets for the first time in the second chapter titled "Spring," is a university student, therefore his junior. The means by which C meets her is similar to how he meets every woman in his life: following. The underlying reason of his chasing and following random women on the street is the same reason as his search. This is the only way he expects to finally meet the woman who he believes will bring true love to his life, and therefore meaning. Whether he relies on pure coincidence on this issue is debatable, yet this possibility cannot be completely denied. Indeed, when he comes across Güler for the first time, she is with a friend of hers named B, whom C claims then and later to be the woman he was actually looking for. He hesitates a moment, not being sure about which one to follow, and chooses to go after Güler in the end:

> "Just now two girls were standing in the corner, talking. Her shoes didn't have hells. Now, that was good… What if…? His heart started pounding. One's raincoat was light brown, the other's light blue. They were just about to separate. He shouted from within: 'Come on, shake each other's hands!' The girls kissed each other. […] He could see both girls running to the corner. The light brown was walking towards Yüksekkaldırım, and the light blue towards Tophane. 'God, which one?' He briefly stopped in the corner. Then followed the light brown. Everything happened during that brief stop. He was wrong again. The light blue was B. If he had followed her, the story would have come to an end. But he went with Güler. Coincidence? He thought not." (Atılgan 2015, 48)[14]

Again, while it might seem that the basis of C's choices is coincidence, he does not think so. If B was indeed the woman he was looking for, choosing her at this very

[14] Şimdi köşede iki kız durmuş konuşuyorlardı. Ayakkapları topuksuzdu. Bak bu iyiydi. Yoksa?.. Yüreği çarptı. Birinin yağmurluğu devetüyü, öbürününki açık maviydi. İşte ayrılacaklardı. İçinden bağırdı: "Haydi, el sıkışın!" Kızlar öpüştüler. […] Köşeye koşarken kızların ikisini de görüyordu. Devetüyü Yüksekkaldırım'dan, açık mavi Tophane'den yana yürüyordu. "Tanrım, hangisi?" Köşede bir durdu. Sonra devetüyünün arkasından gitti. Her şey o bir anlık duruşta olup bitmişti. Gene yanıldı. Açık mavili B. idi. Onun arkasından gitseydi hikâye bitecekti. Ama o Güler'le gitti. Tesadüf mü? Değildi.

moment would end the story. Yet, this is not a story about closure but the search itself, therefore making Güler's involvement in the story not a coincidence but a necessary element for C's development. As indicated, Güler's viewpoint on life does not intersect with C's. It can probably be best observed in her letter to B:

> "I wish he understood me, and shared the same dreams as me!.. I was talking about Cavidan's wedding just the other day. 'Then they didn't love each other,' he said! I was surprised. 'Have you ever come across two people who really love each other marrying? I have not,' he said. I wonder what meant by 'loving.' Weird, isn't it? I can't understand what he wants. How could a person not want a small house, a spouse, two kids? Ah, I get it: From this perspective he is like you. Wouldn't you always say, 'These are not enough!'?" (Ibid, 78)[15]

The division between Güler's expectations and C's is easy to spot. How Güler sees life is not dissimilar to the perspective of many others: marriage, children, and a house. To content herself with these seems enough for her to find happiness in life. Therefore, it can be said that the meaning of life, for her, is intertwined with uniformity and habit itself as marriage is bound to drag one into habit, and the repetition of quotidian actions are supposed to create uniformity among individuals. This makes her unable to comprehend the complexities of C's character and how he is not satisfied with the established norms. While it might seem that Güler is only one character, the main issue here is that the perspective of most of the society on life is this way, causing discrepancies between characters such as C and the others, casting them aside and making them feel alienated. It is worth highlighting that B appears to share C's notions on the inadequateness of common aspirations such as living in a house with a spouse and kids. While this might support C's claim that B was the woman he was looking for, it is in reality the search itself that he is after, thus turning the woman into solely a metaphor. This can be seen through C's failure of reaching B various times in the novel; first when he is introduced to her as the sister of his friend Sami, secondly, his choosing Güler over B when the girls go separate ways, and lastly and most

[15] Beni anlasa, o da benimle aynı düşü görse!.. Geçen gün Cavidan'ın evlenmesini anlatıyordum. "Sevişmiyorlarmış" demesin mi! Şaştım. "Sen hiç gerçekten sevişen iki insanın evlendiklerini gördün mü? Ben görmedim" dedi. Sevişmek dediği acaba neydi? Tuhaf, değil mi? Onun ne istediğini anlayamıyorum. Nasıl olur da bir insan, küçük bir evi, bir eşi, iki çocuğu olsun istemez. Ah, buldum işte: Bu bakımdan o da sana benziyor. Sen, "Yetmez bunlar!" demez miydin?

importantly, when he tries to follow the bus B is in at the end of the novel, yet causing an accident and losing the sight of her eventually.

Ayşe, on the other hand, whom the reader only hears about in the first chapter becomes involved with C again in the third chapter, titled "Summer." As mentioned before, she formerly had a romantic/sexual relationship with him, before the beginning of the novel, and after C terminates his relationship with Güler at the end of Chapter II, he starts seeing Ayşe again. Even though she is a painter, an occupation that carries the stigma of being useless and unprofitable, compared to C, who holds no occupation at all, she, as well, believes she has the right to criticize his ways. While C himself sometimes feels envious of Ayşe for having something to occupy her mind unlike him, he feels resolute in his belief that she is one of those relying on comfort as well: "Perhaps he was jealous of her for painting, something to occupy her mind with. Still, she was comfortable, too" (Ibid, 111). [16] Ayşe's view of life is not entirely similar to Güler's; she agrees to live in sin with C and claims to like him more than others as he is not "normal" (Ibid, 116), yet through the entries in her diary it can be seen that she is questioning almost his every move and fails to understand his conflict and contradictions: "Why is he this delighted upon leaving others' company?" (Ibid, 117). [17] "Marriage! Succumbing to an unknown man's duty of uniting us in a boring office. These are his own words." (Ibid, 116).[18] This might mean that she does not share his beliefs yet does not go against him—at least directly—either. Like Güler, Ayşe is also caught up within the accepted practices in the society. Even though she does not openly say it, it can be claimed that what she wishes is to marry C, or at least have some officiality in their relationship. The people around them, whom C condemns for not being able to understand their way of living, push marriage not only as an obligation to prove one's genuine feelings, but more as a fulfillment of the "moral" codes of society:

> "I wonder how long their tolerance for two people who love each other around them will last. How anxious they will get when they realize the difference and the divergence of this love that surpasses their insufficient scale for love!

[16] Belki onu uğraşacağı bir şeyi olduğu, resim yaptığı için kıskanıyordu. Gene de rahattı.

[17] Başkalarından ayrıldı mı neden böyle seviniyor?"

[18] Evlenmek! Can sıkıcı dairelerden birinde, tanımadığımız bir adamın bizi birleştirmek görevine boyun eğmek. Bu onun sözü.

> They would shun us. They would say we are bad examples for their kids, as if we could be worse examples for their kids than their own selves. What do all these people that live under this roof have in common? That they believe in the obligation of living together. Some like rice with eggplants, some without; some salty, some not; some want to go to bed early, some late; some want to listen to jazz while the other listens to music. Waking up in the morning… Some would talk about their dream. The one who is listening doesn't like listening to dreams. Aren't spouses even like this, too? What do they have in common? Apart from rubbing their skin to each other on particular days of the week? Still, they are putting up with it, because they believe in the obligation of living together. I differ from them because I don't believe in it. This is the cause of my boredom and my joy. I would rather curl into my loneliness than forcing myself to bear this. One person is enough for me. A community founded by two people that love each other. Since we are social creatures, aren't these tight, unproblematic two-people societies the best of human societies?" (Ibid, 107-8)[19]

By rejecting the notion of marriage as an obligation, C criticizes both marriage as a requirement for the proof of love, and the suppression of sexual freedom within the seemingly conservative society. For him, the fact that the disparity between two individuals who form what he calls the two-person societies is alone sufficient for marriage to become unbearable and be reduced to the act of sharing a roof. A significant point here is his claim that these people endure living with each other around what they call marriage because they feel obliged to do so. This restrains the individual's free will, which is one of the basic concepts of existential philosophy. Thus, C's existentialist tendencies are undeniably evident in his dismissal of this so-called obligation. Believing people should be free to live their lives without such social restraints, C's idea of two-person societies focuses on love without having to suffocate it with legal boundaries. It is significant that he describes the prototype of the society he believes in as "the society founded by two people who love (*sevişen*) each other. The word "*sevişen*" comes from the word "*sevişmek*" in Turkish, which carries a double meaning. It both means "to love"

[19] Bunların, çevrelerinde sevişen iki insana gösterdikleri bu hoşgörü ne zamana dek sürecek acaba? Bu sevginin onlardaki güdük sevgi ölçüsünü aşan başkalığını, törelere uymazlığını görünce nasıl tedirgin olacaklar! Bizi aralarından atarlar. Çocuklarına kötü örnek olduğumuzu söylerler. Sanki çocuklarına kendilerinden daha kötü örnek olabilirmişiz gibi. Bu çatının altında yaşayanlarda ortak ne var? Yalnız birlikte yaşama zorunluluğuna inanmaları. Kimi pilavı patlıcanlı ister, kimi patlıcansız; kimi tuzlu, kimi tuzsuz; kimi erken yatmak ister, kimi geç; biri şarkı dinlerken öteki caz müziği ister. Sabahları kalkışlar… Biri gördüğü düşü anlatır. Dinleyen, düş dinlemeyi sevmez. Karı kocalar bile böyle değil mi? Ortak neleri var? Haftanın belli günleri et ete sürtünmekten başka? Gene de dayanıyorlar. Çünkü birlikte yaşama zorunluluğuna inanmışlar. İşte benim onlardan ayrıldığım buna inanmamam. Sıkıntımın da sevincimin de kaynağı bu. Gücün dayanmaktansa yalnızlığıma kaçarım. Bana tek insan yeter. Sevişen iki kişinin kurduğu toplum. Toplumsal yaratıklar olduğumuza göre, insan toplumlarının en iyisi bu daracık, sorunsuz, iki kişilik toplumlar değil mi?

and “to make love.” Thus, C’s claim becomes even more clear, as sexual freedom surpasses the boundaries of the legitimacy of love.

The lack of freedom caused by the consideration of marriage as an obligation reminds one of Sartre’s famous term: “bad faith.” Translated into English as “self-deception” as well, what he means by bad faith is the self-deception humans beings have that they are not free to choose and/or do something, although their free will eliminate any imaginary obstacle on their way to freedom. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre gives the example of a young woman on a date to explain bad faith thoroughly. The woman goes on a date with a man she has met recently, knowing that the man eventually will make a move to initiate sexual activity. When he puts his hand on her leg at dinner, there are two choices for the woman to decide on: one, she can take it as a sexual move and remain aware of its intentions to make a decision, to reject or accept the man, as she has the freedom to do so. Two, she can ignore the meaning behind the sexual gesture and assume that she does not have a choice in the matter. The second is what Sartre calls bad faith, or self-deception. As the names suggest, someone with bad faith is only deceiving themselves by believing that he or she is not free in his or her choices. (Sartre 1993, 55-56). He states that:

> “To be sure, the one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth. Bad faith then has in appearance the structure of falsehood. Only what changes everything is the fact that in bad faith it is from myself that I am hiding the truth. Thus the duality of the deceiver and the deceived does not exist here. Bad faith on the contrary implies in essence the unity of a single consciousness.” (Ibid, 49)

As suggested, it is indeed called a self-deception because of the “duality of the deceiver and the deceived.” Through the disbelief of freedom, whom the subject harms and/or limits is themselves only, hence the self-deception. In a way, it is a self-illusion as the subject adheres to the misconception that their free will is nonexistent, or that fate or destiny surpasses it, upon which nothing can be done. This, as a result, bad faith pushes the subject, or the individual, to inertia and to disillusion. They accept the situation as it is and do not strive to pursue an individual choice. This can be applied to C’s claim that most people stay in marriages because they do not believe in the existence of another option. According to Sartre’s claim then, these people have bad faith, robbing themselves of their freedom and having to suffer from the consequences. Moreover, the self-

deception is so high that they refuse to accept relationships such as C and Ayşe's that are not based on marriage, which they turn into the ultimate deception itself. It can even be suggested that Ayşe and Güler carry this bad faith as well. Considering their need and desire for formality in their relationships with C, the ultimate being marriage and kids, they likewise seem unable to escape this self-illusion. Of course, it can always be suggested that unlike Güler, who seems to be thoroughly fixed on the idea of having a house, a husband, and kids, Ayşe shows dislike of others' disapproval on how she and C prefer to live: "Why do they concern themselves with how we want to live?" [Atılgan 2015, 116][20]). When confronted by one of their neighbors about when their living in sin would come to an end, she responds that there would be no end and it would keep going (Ibid, 116). However, it can be observed that when she begins to have suspicions of pregnancy, her resolution begins to slip away: "I am three days late this month. It could be a sign of pregnancy symptoms."[21] "I am not pregnant. I am extremely ashamed of this happiness within me." (Ibid, 116)[22]. While the hardships of being a single mother are to be taken into account, there is no doubt a society that puts strains on a "two-person society" for living in sin would take it even further in the case of an illegitimate child. Ayşe's bad faith here results from her hiding this situation as a "displeasing truth." Unlike C, she has doubts about a life without marriage, let alone having an illegitimate child. It could be asked that if marriage is her eventual "faith," then she could use pregnancy to obtain it. This brings us to the fact that C seems to be the only character in the novel that has faith in his freedom, and therefore would probably choose not to remain with her and his child in such a situation. While his idleness is a means of freedom for C, for Ayşe it is the cause of all that is wrong with him and their relationship: "The fault is all on his idleness, I wish he at least painted" (Ibid, 127).[23]

2.2. Flâneur or Man of the Crowd? Idling in the City

[20] Neden istediğimiz gibi yaşamamıza karışıyorlar?

[21] Bu ay üç gün gecikti. Gebelik tedirginliklerin öncüsü olabilir.

[22] Gebe değilim. İçimdeki bu sevinçten delice utanıyorum.

[23] Tüm suç onun aylak oluşunda, bari resim yapsa.

An important aspect of C's character is that, by many literary critics he is considered to be a flâneur, although he is not referred as such in the novel. It is, of course, important to know what exactly a flâneur is to be able to understand the character and the novel as a whole. According to Payne and Barbera's *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*, a flâneur is the "French term for a city stroller, popularized by Benjamin in his work on Baudelaire and nineteenth-century Paris. The flâneur is the cultural consumer as modern hero, moving anonymously through the crowd, experiencing city life as a succession of compelling but instantaneous impressions" (Payne and Barbera 2010, 278). C is known to be an idler in the novel, but he is not a regular one. A major reason he is considered to be so is that first of all, he is unemployed, and secondly, he spends most of his time wandering around the streets of Istanbul "aimlessly." I have mentioned before that what he claims to be his aim is to find a woman that will give him the true love he is yearning for: "Even since I have seen the hypocrisy, hollowness, and the ridiculousness of societal values, I have been looking for the only thing I can hold onto that is not ridiculous: True love! A woman." (Atılgan 2015, 149)[24]. Moreover, it is already known that he has the tendency to go after women he does not know on the street, hoping they will turn out to be the woman he is looking for, which is how he meets Güler. This might bring up a debate about whether C is indeed a flâneur if his only aim to in flânerie is to pursue and go after women. As also mentioned in the earlier part of this chapter, it can be observed that behind the wanderings and idling of C, there lies a larger issue than love. "The woman," in a way, becomes a metaphor for what he actually is looking for, which, through his existentialist angst and self-doubt, I claim to be a sense of meaning in life and a desire for full self-awareness. Thus, while C hides behind the search for love, with or without being aware of it, he analyzes life and the society by means of flânerie, which leads to his understanding of everyday life as absurd. Moreover, he also tends to demonstrate his profound connection with the city during his wanderings: "He loved this freshly illuminated city. What he was searching for was here, among these people passing by." (Atılgan 2015, 30). [25] What he is looking for, whether love or meaning, is intertwined with the city itself, and thus encourages his flânerie.

[24] Ben, toplumdaki değerlerin ikiyüzlülüğünü, sahteliğini, gülünçlüğünü göreli beri, gülünç olmayan tek tutamağı arıyorum: Gerçek sevgiyi! Bir kadın.

[25] Işıklarını yeni yakmış bu şehri seviyordu. Aradığı burda, şu gelip geçen insanların içindeydi.

As already mentioned, Walter Benjamin's essay on Baudelaire, called "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," is considered to be a major text on flânerie. There, he makes a distinction between Baudelaire's flâneur and what Edgar Allan Poe calls a "man of the crowd." C was interpreted by many as a flâneur, yet his idling takes place among the crowd as well. Even the first sentence of the novel refers to a crowd: "All of a sudden, I realized that she could be among this *crowd*, on this pavement overflowing with people" (Ibid, 9, my italics). According to Benjamin, though, the man of the crowd is not the same thing as the flâneur (Benjamin 1992, 168). Benjamin states that "the man of the crowd is no flâneur. In him, composure has given way to manic behavior. Hence he exemplifies, rather, what had to become of the flâneur once he was deprived of the milieu to which he belonged" (Ibid, 168). Thus, to be able to determine whether C is a flâneur or a man of the crowd one has to answer the question of whether he fits into his surroundings. This might come as a challenging question at first, as he seems to have a special bond with the city, yet not quite so with its crowd. Throughout the novel, he seems to detach himself from others, from the "overflowing crowd," and apart from when he is with his girlfriends, he seems to loiter or idle on his own. His avoidance of others can also be inferred from his desire to create his own "two-person society," whose occurrence seems doubtful whether he ever finds the woman he is looking for or not, as he himself begins questioning if it is possible to detach oneself from others at all: "What if one could never be freed from the others?" (Atılgan 2015, 119).[26] Furthermore, C does not seem to have a profound connection with any of the characters he seems to meet in the novel, or with the people that pass as his "friends," a problem caused by the fact that his thoughts on life, love, and the way of the world differ from almost everyone else around him. Thus, it might be claimed that his milieu cannot seem to meet his mentality. Plus, it can also be argued that he also contains the "manic behavior" that Benjamin claims to be a characteristic of the man of the crowd. One reason for this is his psycho-sexual problems resulting from the fact that his turbulent and disorderly relationship with his father, despite his being dead for years, is still haunting him and shaping his relationships with people, and most importantly, with women. Because of his father's incorrigible obsession with women and sex, the breaking point being C's realizing that his father had been having sex with C's aunt, whom he deeply loved and saw as a mother figure, ("Since his

[26] Yoksa kişi, dışarıdakilerden hiç mi kurtulamayacaktı?

childhood, perhaps because of her aunt, he had been disgusted by his father" [Ibid, 12][27]), he begins to detest both him and his own sexual desire: "Probably, no one suffered from being created as a man as much as I had. I would read constantly to be able to rid myself of that stinging desire deep within for a woman. It wasn't working." (Ibid, 123)[28]. While this might not seem like a serious manic behavior, from a psychoanalytic perspective it does leave a negative effect on his connection with sexuality, resulting in his poor relationship with women that leads him into further alienation. In all this, while C is said to be a flâneur, I think he fits more into Poe's idea of the "man of the crowd," if, according to Benjamin's claim, there has to be a separation between the two.

Nevertheless, flâneur or man of the crowd, it cannot be denied that behind the action of C's walking lies a restlessness and a sense of non-belonging. As walking itself is a constant shift between departure and arrival from one place to another, it makes it hardly possible for the individual to have a perception of home. Michael de Certeau explains this in *The Practice of Everyday Life* through his remarks that walking carries the connotation of search, thus erasing the presence of an attachment to a specific and/or permanent place:

> "To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of social place—an experience that is, to be sure, broken up into countless tiny deportations (displacements and walks), compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric, and placed under the sign. Of what ought to be, ultimately, the place but is only a name, the City." (de Certeau 1984, 103)

What Certaeu means by "proper" is "a spatial or institutional localization" (p. xix), in other words, it becomes a place which might provide one with a sense of belonging. When we look at C, in spite of the fact that he has a physical house and much money that can take him anywhere, he is far from being able to pin himself down to a place. Even though he comes back to his house almost every night, he still lacks a place as belonging is something more than physicality. Furthermore, the thought of having to abide by a place is scary to him: "He was afraid of becoming accustomed to. […] It was bad for him to

[27] Eskiden beri, belki teyzesi yüzünden, hep iğrenirdi babasından.

[28] Hiç kimse erkek yaratılmanın azabını benim kadar çekmemiştir. İçimdeki batıcı kadın isteğinden kurtulmak için boyuna okurdum. Olmuyordu.

have a place. Then, one would begin to live according to the wishes of that place, rather than their own" (Atılgan 2015, 69)[29]. Hence, it could be said that Certeau's analysis fits the case of C; walking, for him, is more than the act itself. It becomes a metaphor for a search for his place in the world, a conundrum that has been intriguing Existentialists for centuries. This means that in the novel, walking, flânerie, and/or being the man of the crowd are all interrelated through Existentialism; it is this existential angst that ultimately fuels all what other people see as problematic in C, such as his idling, aloofness, and wandering. Yet, walking *does* turn the city into a social experience as discussed in Certeau. It is by means of walking that C meets Güler:

> "After they passed Tünel and pulled themselves away from the crowd, the noise, and began walking along that deserted street which gave the impression of a place that was once built meticulously, but was later disapproved and abandoned, he finally understood her. Güler glanced at him and slowed down. So, she wanted to talk here. Their first conversation was going take place in the street she chose." (Ibid, 54)[30]

This, I believe, is significant because even when C is sure she is not the woman he is looking for, her entrance into his life and their relationship have an effect and shifts his life to some extent. The fact that she is a university student also begins to determine the places of their meetings as well. For instance, one of these places is a patisserie, a popular destination for romantic dates at the time. While this does not mean that C is not used to be, and eat, among people, as he constantly eats out every day in different restaurants, he does not particularly belong either in Güler's social circle or in the social experience that their relationship takes him. This is where spatiality itself becomes significant, as it becomes a part of C's search as well. Even when he is with other women, in the cinema, patisserie, or a summer house, his search is continuing, which is one more reason to claim that the woman is merely a metaphor for his pursuit.

Orhan Koçak likens Atılgan's map of C's flanerie to a kind of Bermuda Triangle, revolving around Karaköy, Taksim, and Nişantaşı, three of Istanbul's most central and crowded neighborhoods (Koçak 2017, 49). One reason for this is undoubtedly linked to

[29] Alışmaktan korkuyordu […] Bir yerleri olması kötüydü. Sonra insan kendinin değil, o yerin isteğine uygun yaşamaya başlardı.

[30] Tünel'i geçip, kalabalıktan, gürültüden kurtulunca onu, insanların önce özene bezene yaptıkları, sonra beğenmeyip bıraktıkları bir yer duygusunu veren tenha sokakta yürürlerken anladı. Güler ona bakmış, yavaşlamıştı. Demek burada konuşmak istiyordu. İlk konuşmaları onun seçtiği sokakta olacaktı.

his economic status, as these neighborhoods are, and were, also among the most expensive in the city. Thanks to his tormenting father's inheritance, C is able to carry out his walking and search in this "triangle." The actual term Koçak uses is the "Bermuda Triangle of Devil" (Bermuda Şeytan Üçgeni), a popularized usage of the term in Turkish that carries an evil attribution as a result of the distressing and mysterious disappearances in the area. In Atılgan's *Aylak Adam*, the evilness of this triangle is debatable, yet my claim is that C tends to create his major criticism, habit, through this triangle. While he tries to escape it by eating out in different restaurants every day and following unknown women to isolated, narrow streets, the stability of his route in a way is the very thing that leads him to habit and repetition, which he considers as absurd, and the killer of all originality and uniqueness, thus adding the evilness into the triangle.

Nonetheless, even if his route might seem stable and even "evil," his constant search for meaning in life, which he tries to realize by walking also explains why this is considered as the first city novel in Turkish. C's character and the city merge into one, the city becoming an inseparable part of him, the channel of his search: "His ears were ringing with the buzzing of the large city. Perhaps, the footsteps he was searching for were among this buzzing, too. He turned and began walking towards one of the vast streets where people and cars were merging together." (Atılgan 2015, 44)[31].

2.3. Habit, or the Inescapable Loop of the Absurdity of Everyday Life

Until now, I have tried to examine and demonstrate the differences in C's character and how this alienates him from the society he lives in, as his attempt to escape the daily routine of things, or in other words, habit, gradually drags him toward instability. His existential tendencies, fueled by his constant wanderings through the streets and in the crowd, bring him face to face with his ultimate object: subverting the order that he truly despises, an order that revolves around repetition and tedium. I have discussed before that C's perception on love and the world itself differs from others'; he refuses to work, he is unable to keep stable relationships with women, and he does not believe in the "sanctity"

[31] Kulaklarında büyük şehrin uğultusu vardı. Belki aranan ayak sesleri de bu uğultunun içindeydi. Döndü. İnsanların, arabaların kaynaştığı büyük caddelerden yana yürüdü.

of marriage, neither does he consider it to be necessary. In fact, its very existence is an obstacle in the way of happiness, formed by the unending criticism of others. C sees repetition as a nightmare; he feels the suffocation caused by doing the same things every day, passing by the same road, seeing the same people constantly, and so on, which is the main justification for his idleness and solitude, because in jobs and marriages habit is inevitable at some point. Even in his relationships with women, his deepest fear lies in habit, and becoming accustomed to places, people, actions, and others:

> "He devoured the orange juice the waiter put on the table. He was thirsty. It was probably because of the scrambled eggs with sausages he had just eaten. When he asked for eggs with sausages at the restaurant, the waiter said '— Our bacon is great, sir. If you'd like, I could have it made with bacon instead,' upon which he stared at the waiter and said 'I want it with sausages.' The waiter here wasn't like that. He didn't bother to talk. He would take the extra money he left on the table when they left, and wouldn't saying 'goodbye' to them. If he did, they wouldn't be meeting here like they had done five times, but at another patisserie with a lot of customers like this one. Every time he came here, he was surprised to find that the waiter was still not fired. He wanted him to be fired, and wanted a flattering, clingy, authentic waiter to replace him so he wouldn't be meeting Güler always at this table. He was scared of becoming used to." (Ibid, 69)[32]

This shows that while C criticizes people for bowing down to habit and building their lives around it, he is well aware of the tendency human beings, including himself, have for it, hence the cause of his anxiety. It takes him to the point of wishing that the sulky waiter were fired, so that he could get rid of his usual place before beginning to feel an attachment to it or becoming accustomed to going there on a constant basis. Even the fact that they sit at the same table turns into a form of adaption, thus requires him to avoid it. He states that he comprehends the idea behind becoming accustomed: "He could understand becoming accustomed. There, even the human brain had the tendency to become used to and keep repeating the same thing" (Ibid, 41)[33]. This is significant as it shows that C's contradictions and opposition to the order of things is not caused because

[32] Garsonun masaya bıraktığı portakal suyunu bir solukta içti. Susamıştı. Az önce yediği sucuklu yumurtadan olacaktı. Lokantadaki garsondan sucuklu yumurta isteyince, "— Pastırmamız çok iyidir efendim. İsterseniz pastırmalı yaptırayım," diyen adama dik dik, "Sucuklu istiyorum," demişti. Buradaki garson öyle değildi. Konuşmağa yeltenmiyordu. Ayrılırlarken masanın ucuna fazladan bıraktığı parayı alıyor, arkalarından, "güle güle" bile demiyordu. Dese, Güler'le beş sefer de bu aynı yerde değil, gene buna benzer, gireni çıkanı bol bir başka pastanede buluşurlardı. Buraya her gelişinde adamın işinden atılmamış olmasına şaşardı. Atılsın, yerine sulu, yılışık, gerçek bir garson gelsin de Güler'le hep bu masada buluşmasınlar istiyordu. Alışmaktan korkuyordu

[33] Alışmayı anlıyordu. İşte insan beyni bile alışıyor, hep aynı şeyi tekrarlıyordu.

he does not understand it, but vice versa. While he holds the fear within himself, he acts out to break the hypnotic effect of habit, even if it comes out as an absurd reaction. His anger against people who are contented with living a life of repetition is induced by his belief that the reason why others do not forgo habit is because it is comfortable and known. They simply do not bother to leave their comfort zones, aware or unaware that there is something much more: "They are comfortable within their molds. I am not like them." (Ibid, 144)[34]. While comfort is a means of happiness and satisfaction for many, it is the root of habit, and therefore scares him as much: "This much comfort is scaring me. I wish at least I became sick for a few days" (Ibid, 114)[35]. This also might sound absurd to many, that he wishes for sickness to be able to leave the comfort that most are seeking, yet C sees habit as the real absurdity, the reason everyday life has become absurd, as it lacks novelty and stimulation. By using a metaphor of tree branches, he draws a distinction between the ones living by comfort, and the others—like him—who strive for more in life, discontent with the common:

> *"Kuyara* is the comfort coming from the continuation of familiar pleasures. Sleeping without thinking. The comfort of the constant passing of days. What about *adako*? I don't know if you have ever noticed the tendency of tree branches to separate themselves from the trunk. It always grows further. It is an escape from the comfort of the trunk that took roots in the earth. A thirst for freedom. I call this 'the tree branch complex.' […] The one who got the tree branch complex is anxious. Just like the way people prune branches to keep them closer to the trunk, one's relatives also prune this *Adako* within the one. They do everything they can to prevent them from separating themselves from the trunk. On some people nothing works. They are the rebellious branch. They separate. No axe can bring them down." (Ibid, 127)[36]

This is quite the ideal metaphor to make this distinction between his character and the others. By defining the ones with "tree branch complex," C is actually describing himself, perhaps alluding to the notion that others see him as problematic, or even disordered. Plus, the idea that they try to keep the ones like C down, by trying to mold—or prune in

[34] Onlar kalıplarının içinde rahat. Onlardan değilim ben.

[35] Bu kadar rahatlık beni korkutuyor. Hiç olmazsa birkaç gün sürecek bir hastalığa tutulsam.

[36] Kuyara, alışılmış tatların sürüp gitmesindeki rahatlıktır. Düşünmeden uyuyuvermek. Biteviye geçen günlerin kolaylığı. Ya adako? Ağaç dalındaki, gövdeden ayrılma eğilimini fark ettin mi bilmem? Hep öteye uzar. Gövdenin toprağa kök salmış rahatlığından ötürü bir kaçıştır bu. Özgürlüğe susamışlık. Buna ben 'ağaç dalı kompleksi' diyorum. […] Ağaç dalı kompleksine tutulmuş kişi tedirgindir. İnsanların ağaç dallarını budayıp gövdeye yaklaştırdıkları gibi, yakınları onun içindeki bu Adako'yu da budarlar. Onu gövdeden ayırmamak için ellerinden geleni yaparlar. Kimi insana ne yapılsa yararı olmaz. Asi daldır o. Ayrılır. Balta işlemez ona.

this case—them with social stereotypes, such as marriage, could be validated. As one remembers his relationship with Ayşe and Güler, both of whom wanted to change, or least wished for change, in his character, C's claim that others try to "prune" rebel souls such as himself becomes justified.

As an existentialist hero, C's notions on absurdity remind one of none other than Albert Camus, perhaps the best-known name of Absurdism. Atılgan's characters, especially C and Zebercet (from *Anayurt Oteli*) were criticized by some as being Camus-like, and when comparing Camus's point of view to C's, it can be inferred that they indeed intersect at some point. Basically, Camus' idea was that existence itself is absurd, because the individual is looking for a meaning in life when there happens to be none at all. In *The Myth of Sisyphus,* he likens the situation of human beings to the story of Sisyphus from Greek Mythology. Sisyphus was condemned by the gods to roll a boulder up a hill every day, only for it to roll down at night, turning all his efforts into futility. Camus claimed that like Sisyphus, human beings live their lives repeating the same things over again, similar to C's thoughts on habit. Camus also states that the absurdity of this is related to consciousness: "If this myth is tragic, that is because its hero is conscious. Where would his torture be, indeed, if at every step the hope of succeeding upheld him? The workman of today works every day in his life at the same tasks, and this fate is no less absurd. But it is tragic only at the rare moments when it becomes conscious." (Camus, 185). This might give an idea on the reason for C's misery on the structure of life, as he is aware of the status quo forcing others to repetition. As a result, his own life turns into a tragedy, while others keep living a life of unawareness and satisfaction, something he rebels against: "'Why? Why are you all like this?' He was on his own in a world that was created to be contented with what's there, without searching, without thinking." (Atılgan 2015, 152)[37].

The response Camus presents for the absurdity of life is suicide: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy." (Camus, 10). The conundrum here is that if life is indeed meaningless, then there is hardly any difference

[37] "Neden? Neden böylesiniz?" Olanla yetinerek, aramadan, düşünmeden yaşanılsın diye yaratılmış bir dünyada yalnızdı.

between keeping living and committing suicide. This might also be the reason why the novel does not end with C's suicide. Close to the end, he takes off his clothes, goes into the water and keeps moving forward, giving the impression that he is going to kill himself:

> "He walked in the sea. He could hear the cold line of the water slowly rising on his body: From his feet to his calves, then his knees and legs… Then his underwear got soaked. It was a male's underwear. He wondered if his father also used to swim. There was no salvation. "Why not? Being bit by fish teeth in the silence of the bottom of the sea… There was a boy at school with fish-like eyes. Why wouldn't there be fish with human-like eyes, too? I am so exhausted… He turned with all his energy and let himself go straightly. "The bottom of the sea doesn't accept human corpses." When his feet stepped on the slippery pebbles after what seemed like a long descending to him, his head stayed above the water. This bodiless head was probably looking weird. At the time he was wondering who would find his clothes if he were to drown." (Atılgan 2015, 132-33)[38]

His (self-)despair and exhaustion with the world can be observed, and although it cannot be claimed for sure that his first intention was suicide when he goes into the water, he does consider the thought. Atılgan himself told in an interview that he actually considered killing off C, but decided against it in the end, thinking it would be too melancholic (Andak 1992, 61). If we take Camus's concept of suicide as a base, then it could also be said that C might be well-aware of the fact that dead or alive, he will not be able to subvert the order he is against: "Perhaps, he could only subvert this order in his dreams." (Atılgan 2015, 47).[39] So, while there is an ongoing relation between existentialism, absurdity, and suicide, the last is less of a solution than a reaction. C's death will make little to no affect in others' lives, and they would keep going on living the life that they know based on comfort and habit.

While C does not commit suicide, his psychology seems to deteriorate through the end of the novel, implying signs of madness. Perhaps the reason is that his hope of finding what he is looking for is dwindling away to nothing, realizing that there might indeed be no

[38] Denizin içine yürüdü. Soğuk su çizgisinin bedenindeki yavaştan yükselişini duyuyordu: Ayaklarından baldırlarına, dizlerine, bacaklarına... Sonra donu ıslandı. Bu bir erkek donuydu. Gözlerini kapayıp atladı. Acaba babası da yüzer miydi? Kurtuluş yoktu. "Neden yokmuş! Deniz dibinin suskunluğunda balık dişleriyle ısırılmak... Okulda balık gözlü bir çocuk vardı. Neden insan gözlü balıklar olmasın? Öyle yorgunum ki!.." Bütün gücüyle dönüp kendini dimdik bıraktı. "Deniz dibi insan leşini kabul etmez." Ona çok uzun gelen bir inişin sonunda ayakları kaygan çakıllara bastığı zaman başı suyun üstünde kaldı. Bu bedensiz kafanın tuhaf bir görünüşü olmalıydı. Şu an onun içinden, boğulsaydı giysilerini kimin bulacağı geçiyordu.

[39] Belki bu düzeni ancak düşlerinde bozardı.

meaning life bears. "[C] has lost all his values, he is looking for something to hold on to. I won't be surprised if he goes completely crazy soon" (Ibid, 152).[40] Adding to his psychological problems dating back to his childhood, these upcoming sings of madness only add to what Benjamin calls "manic behavior" that defines the man of the crowd. Moreover, madness might also be C's reaction to the ongoing and endless absurdity of life and his awareness of his inability to do something against it. In a way, both suicide and madness are the end of self-awareness, yet considering that the latter is not chosen by the individual, it adds more desperation, and in my belief melancholy (contrary to what Atılgan said), to the tone of the novel towards the end. Camus states at the end of *The Myth of Sisyphus* that "[o]ne must imagine Sisyphus happy" (Camus, 189). Even though it is apparent that he is not, by choosing to imagine him as happy, the individual chooses to disregard the discomfort of the absurdity of life. So perhaps the reader of *Aylak Adam* could follow the same and imagine C as sane, the difference it would make being debatable.

In the end, whether ignorance is bliss or not, there is little doubt that if life is indeed meaningless as Camus claims; C's search for meaning, love, or another way of life is as pointless as Sisyphus' pushing the boulder up every day, as it will result in nothing. The end of the novel just proves it; right when he finally finds B, the woman whom he believes to be his true love, he throws himself in front of a taxi to be able to follow the bus she mounts, leading to a fight with the taxi driver instead when he causes a car accident. It results in his missing her as the bus disappears out of his sight, most probably for good: "He remained silent. Talking was useless. He was never going to mention her to anyone, again. He knew they wouldn't understand" (Atılgan 2015, 155).[41]

[40] Bütün değerlerini yitirmiş, dayanacak bir şey arıyor. Yakında büsbütün kaçırırsa şaşmam.

[41] Sustu. Konuşmak gereksizdi. Bundan sonra kimseye ondan söz etmeyecekti. Biliyordu, anlamazlardı.

3. JULIO CORTÁZAR AND *RAYUELA*: THE (EXISTENTIALIST) LATIN AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL

3.1. "The Situation of the Latin American Intellectual": Julio Cortázar and *Rayuela*'s Horacio Oliveira

When Julio Cortázar penned his noted article "The Situation of the Latin American Intellectual" in 1967, he had been in the 16th year of his self-imposed exile:

> "I've been living outside Latin America for sixteen years now, and that I think of myself above all as a *cronopio* who writes novels and short stories with no other end than the one which is passionately pursued by all *cronopios*: my own delight. I have to make a real effort to understand that despite these idiosyncrasies, I am nonetheless a Latin American intellectual." (Cortázar 2010, 341)

Although he was born in Brussels, Belgium in 1914, Cortázar grew up in Buenos Aires as his parents were originally from Argentina, and lived there until 1951 when he left for Europe for good upon Juan Perón's rise to power, since as a socialist Cortázar's ideology did not match with the regime of Perón. Even before Perón's rise to power, Cortázar became involved in a fight as a result of this disparity of ideologies: "In 1945–46, since I knew I was going to lose my job because I'd been in the fight against Perón, when Perón won the presidential election, I resigned before I was backed against the wall as so many colleagues who held onto their jobs were." (Harss & Dohmann 1967, 214-25). Moreover, this results in his incarceration, very similar to Atılgan's situation (as he, too, was sent to jail as a result of his claimed involvement in communism), and his eventual migration/self-exile to Paris upon Perón's victory in the upcoming elections. In "The Situation of the Latin American Intellectual," he defines himself as a *cronopio*, type of fictional person he introduces in *Historias de cronopios y de famas.* The book divides

people into different types of imaginary beings, including *famas* and *esperanzas* apart from *cronopios*. He defines *cronopio*s as being "disordered and tepid" (Cortázar 1999, 166) yet also not easily disheartened in the face of trouble and setback (Ibid, 164). The reason why he likens himself to a *cronopio* could be open to discussion, yet in my opinion, one reason can be given as the fact that even his exile cannot come in the way of his connection with his roots, with Latin America, and does not deter him from calling himself a "Latin American Intellectual," rather than a European one. However, he goes on to explain that even though he defines himself as Latin American, his exile from Argentina and the probable continuation of his life in Europe cannot be disregarded and is also a part of his identity: "The fact that my books have been available for years in Latin America does not negate the deliberate and irreversible fact that I left Argentina in 1951 and that I still live in a European country which I chose for no other reason than my sovereign desire to live and write in what for me would be the fullest, most satisfying way" (Cortázar 2010, 341). Thus, this prolific Latin American intellectual who rose to be one of the most read authors of Latin American literature finds solace in 20th century Paris, and writes many of his most famous works—including *Rayuela*—there.

When the question of his Latin Americanness is set, there emerges another: what exactly makes him an intellectual? His contribution to the literary community through the abundance of his published works is sufficient for him to qualify as an intellectual, plus his knowledge on philosophy and classics, yet his background plays a critical role as well. As mentioned before, he was born in Brussels as his parents were diplomats, and as a result he had knowledge of French—his first language-- from a young age, and later became fluent in English, too—as observed in the many interviews he gives and the letters he writes. Moreover, his travels abroad, including the United States and Cuba, are sure to have contributed to both his writing and his sense of understanding the world, yet it is his ability above all to combine all of it within literature to create the uniqueness of his characters, within the frame of such universal concepts and/or problems such as Existentialism, as observed in *Rayuela*, which he himself calls a "human problem": "I took up an *existential* problem [in the process of writing 'The Pursuer'], a human problem which was later amplified in *The Winners*, and above all in *Hopscotch (Rayuela)*" (Harss and Dohmann 1967, 224, my italics). The reflection of his success in analyzing human psyche is apparent in *Rayuela*, and most importantly in the character of Horacio Oliveira, who, despite being an Argentine expat in Paris, can portray the problems and the crises

of all humanity, holding *Rayuela*'s place as Cortázar's masterpiece and most famous work to the day.

Where does Existentialism come into the scene? It is known that Cortázar wrote and published *Rayuela* in Paris, in 1963 to be exact, four years after the publication of *Aylak Adam* in Turkey. As Paris is famously referred to as the "capital" of philosophy and, especially, Existentialism, it is no wonder that Cortázar was highly influenced by the movement. In fact, he even mentions in his letters that he was able to meet and talk with Camus himself: "Gallimard's aforementioned cocktail gave me the grand happiness of being able to talk for a long time with Camus. When I recognized him […] I approached him with all the violence of shy people, I told him that I had translated one of his essays, and he joined the conversation warmly" (Cortázar 2012, 345, my translation).[42] Belonging in the literary circle of Paris, keeping in contact with such figures as Camus was not an unattainable goal. Hence, Paris molds and shapes the writing of Cortázar, especially *Rayuela*, yet as the Latin American intellectual it is significant to examine how Existentialism also spread and rose to popularity in Latin America, as well.

Even before it was a major movement in Europe and the Anglophone world, Existentialism was broadly existent in Latin American philosophy. While it gained a larger audience upon the translations of European Existentialists such as Gabriel Marcel and Jean-Paul Sartre into Spanish, it was ahead of its time as when the movement was at its pinnacle in the United States during the 1960s, the philosophers in Latin America had proceeded to newer movements and ideas by that time (Toledo 2011, 215). It is also known that Cortázar's first exposure to Existentialism goes back to his time in Buenos Aires before he leaves for Paris. He mentions the name of Sartre in one of his letters to his friend Luis Gagliardi: "Do you know anything by [Sartre]? They translated one of his stories in *Sur*, 'The Room' ('La Chambre'). An atrocious, monstrous, admirable thing. And then, when I read that story, I felt a curiosity for the works of the author, and I knew that being very young and vastly known in France as an acclaimed psychologist and philosopher on topics with Bergsonian tones, experimented with novel writing through

[42] El susodicho cocktail de Gallimard (al que fui con Enrique Revol) me dio la gran alegría de poder charlar largo rato con Camus. Cuando le reconocí […] me le acerqué con toda la violencia de los tímidos, le dije que había traducido un ensayo suyo, y él entró cordialmente en la charla.

his work *La Nausee,* and later with some stories." (Cortázar 2012, 137, my translation).[43] Thus, Cortázar's first encounter with Sartre and his work takes place through his exploration of one of Sartre's stories and he later develops an interest to his work. His apparent interest in Sartre and his philosophy only grows as he later translates *The Existential Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* into Spanish and publishes it in 1951 (Harris 2009, 5).

While Cortázar's starting point with Existentialism is back where his roots are, in Latin America, it cannot be ignored that his time in France (twelve years between his relocation to Paris and the publication of *Rayuela*) leaves its consequential impacts on the book. Still, it is useful to look at the history of Latin America—and of Argentina within it—to be able to observe the place of *Rayuela* in Latin American literature thoroughly and examine why it is considered as a pioneering work. When the book was published in Paris in 1963, Arturo Illia gained the majority vote in the 1963 elections in Argentina and became the new president upon the annulment of the election of 1962, officially starting the Post-Peronist era (Skidmore & Smith 2005, 93). Latin America in general, on the other hand, was dealing with the consequences of the Cold War, while the marks of the Second World War were still lingering. The 1960s were also the beginning of what would come to be called the "boom" in Latin American literature, a literary movement where major writers came to write and publish prolifically and be read in Latin America and Europe alike. Apart from Cortázar, the "boom" included many of the major writers of Latin American literature that are still widely read and known, such as Gabriel Garcia Marquéz from Columbia, Carlos Fuentes from Mexico, Mario Vargas Llosa from Peru, and Jorge Luis Borges from Argentina. In fact, the literature that was produced during the boom was considered groundbreaking, inspired by the modernists, yet offering something new at the same time, such as the emergence of "Magical Realism," a movement that started in Latin America mostly through the works of Marquéz. What is called "the New Novel" also emerged at that time, a novel that challenged the acknowledged norms of traditional novel writing. Cortázar's *Rayuela* was considered as one and played a significant part in its emergence: "[T]he post-war era was the moment

[43] ¿Conoce usted algo de [Sartre]? En *Sur*, se tradujo uno de sus cuentos: "El aposento". Algo atroz, monstruoso, admirable. Ya entonces, cuando leí a ese relato, sentí curiosidad por la obra del autor, y supe que, muy joven aun, y vastamente conocido en Francia como psicólogo y filosofo consagrado a temas de tono bergsoniano, había incursionado en la novela con una obra, *La Nausee,* y luego algunos cuentos.

in which the Faulknerian impulse predominated in Latin American fiction and that the Joycean mode would only fully crystallize in the 1960s, after the publication of Cortázar's *Rayuela* in 1963." (Martin 1998, 172).

Indeed, *Rayuela* is no ordinary novel; it was not when it was first published almost sixty years ago, and it still continues to intrigue its readers today. The structure of the novel was considered as one of the first of its kind; its structure is not linear and there are multiple ways the book can be read. Cortázar divided the book into three parts: "From the Other Side," "From This Side," and "From Diverse Sides," the last one consisting of extendable chapters. The chapters in the first part take place in Paris, those of the second in Buenos Aires. The structure of the novel is challenging, as Cortázar offers two different ways of reading the novel. At the beginning, he welcomes the reader with a "Table of Instructions," in which the chapters—155 in total—are put into a specific order. The first way to read the novel is linearly, until Chapter 56, where the novel is supposed to end when read in this sequence. The second way, Cortázar explains, is read through the list he presents, starting with Chapter 73, followed by Chapter 1-2-166, and so on. Of course, the reader can also start from the beginning an read all the 156 Chapters in a linear way—which also seems to be the only way to read all the chapters as Cortázar does not include Chapter 55 in the second method—this was not a proposed method by Cortázar himself, still every text is open to any kind of reading, thus it surely could be possible. This structure reminds one why the novel is called *Rayuela*, or *Hopscotch*; in a way, the reader jumps through the chapters to read the novel. Moreover, it also suggests why this was considered as a pioneering "new novel;" through *Rayuela,* Cortázar experimented with language and structure, and brought down the walls of traditional novel-writing with the elimination of linearity and completeness. In fact, George Lukács explains in *The Theory of the Novel* that novel as an art form is supposed to be incomplete if it is to escape imperfection:

> "The novel is the art-form of virile maturity: this means that the completeness of the novel's world, if seen objectively, is an imperfection, and if subjectively experienced, it amounts to resignation. The danger by which the novel is determined is twofold: either the fragility of the world may manifest itself so crudely that it will cancel out the immanence of meaning which the form demands, or else the longing for the dissonance to be resolved, affirmed and absorbed into the work may be great that it will lead to a premature closing

> of the circle of the novel's world, causing the form to disintegrate into disparate, heterogeneous parts". (Lukács 1971, 71-72.)

Lukács' claim of the incomplete novel as the accomplished can be applied to the case of *Rayuela*. Apart from being an open-ended book, when read according to the two methods Cortázar suggests, the book is never thoroughly finished; one reading disregards almost the half of the book, and the second excludes a chapter. Its incompleteness, therefore, could generate a form that is bereft of imperfections, although perfection itself is a constructed and subjective term. Still, *Rayuela*'s innovative structure does not force a "premature closing" as Lukács suggests, yet it does include a fragmented form, albeit not heterogenous. In other words, *Rayuela*'s plot is fragmented as it is not linear, and is mixed with extendable chapters (some of them composed solely of fragments from other authors' and philosophers' works) yet no chapter ever repeats itself or can be regarded on the same level, thus making it challenging to call it "heterogenous." This can, at some point, hint the novel's level of convolution and entanglement. In fact, Carlos Fuentes once called the novel a "Pandora's box" or, "*caja de Pandora*," alluding to its complexity. (Fuentes 1969, 67). It is also known in Latin American literature as a *contranovela*[44], or *anti-novela*, a type of novel that rejects the usage of conventional forms. As seen in the structure and form of *Rayuela*, it is, therefore, not too difficult to recognize why it is called so. As a matter of fact, the novel is not the only "opposition;" the anti-novel creates its anti-hero as well: Horacio Oliveira in this case.

The whole book revolves around Oliveira the protagonist, who—at least in the first part—is an Argentine expat living in Paris with his mistress called La Maga (meaning "sorceress" or "female magician"), whose real name later is introduced as Lucía. As the novel is not linear, the first chapter starts with Oliveira's search for La Maga, who has disappeared: "Would I find La Maga?" (Cortázar 2013, 3). From this perspective, it seems quite similar to the opening of *Aylak Adam*, both beginning with a search, more specifically, for a woman. While the woman C is looking for in *Aylak Adam* is unknown to him, La Maga appears in most of the chapters due to the lack of linearity in the novel. In fact, she is a part of Oliveira's intellectual group, called the Serpent Club, where they meet to drink, listen to music, and have discussions on subjects such as philosophy and literature. The first part of the book is set in Paris, following Oliveira and his friends'

[44] "*Contra*" means "against" or "opposite" in Spanish, implying the genre's refusal of traditional novel forms.

bohemian lifestyle mixed with existential angst. His relationship with La Maga deteriorates upon the arrival of her son, Rocamadour, who begins to live with them. Shortly after Oliveira leaves her, the child dies and La Maga disappears, causing Oliveira to search for her. Upon a series of events, the Serpent Clubs disperses, and Oliveira goes back to Buenos Aires, where he begins to work at a circus along with his childhood friend, Traveler. After some time, the circus is sold and is turned into an asylum. Oliveira becomes delusional and begins to confuse Talita, Traveler's wife, with La Maga. In the end, he jumps out of the window at the asylum, but survives.

While the plot might seem simple at the first glance, the novel is full of existential and absurd elements, along with surrealist overtones. Apart from taking inspiration from authors such as Camus and Sartre, Cortázar was also deeply interested in the Surrealist movement. Even when Existentialist authors, including the aforementioned Sartre and Camus, denounced Surrealism for they believed existentialist concerns were to be considered superior as a more important problem of the human nature, Cortázar refused to forgo it completely, and mixed the elements of both Existentialism and Surrealism in his works (Langowski 1982, 133). Similar to *Aylak Adam*, the broody atmosphere of existential angst is palpable through *Rayuela*. Of course, the fact that first part takes place during the Paris of 1950s, where the French Existentialism was profoundly in the mainstream, is influential. In addition to this, the lifestyle of Oliveira also suggests existential nuances. While he would not be called an idler like C, he is more engaged with and interested in art as an intellectual, rather than working at a regular job—at least in the first part of the novel. Moreover, his sensitivity to and the awareness of the world he lives in, and the burden it creates is referred many times, by Oliveira himself and others around him alike: "Oliveira is pathologically sensitive to the pressure of what is around, the world he lives in, his fate, to speak kindly, in a word, he can't stand his surroundings. More briefly, he has a *world-ache.*" (Cortázar 2013, 67, my italics). The debate of having a "world-ache" syncs with the whole concept of existentialism: life becomes a heavy burden as a result of the search for meaning, since in humans, unlike other objects, existence precedes essence, leaving them with the quest of finding the purpose of their existence. This quest, or search, can be defined as "pressure," as without a sense of meaning life might become a burden for the ones such as Oliveira. According to existential philosophy, truth has more of a subjective connotation, and can pass as a personal notion (Flynn 2006, 2). Yet, in daily life, as a result of societal norms, for a

notion to pass as truth its acceptance by the majority becomes almost obligatory. For most people, the meaning of life is to keep oneself busy. The focal point is, however, how it is done: Oliveira and his club also keep themselves busy with art, music, and philosophy. For others, on the other hand, preoccupation is more or less synonymous with work, and/or marriage. Thus, while working is, according to the status quo, an expectation and therefore a truth, it is not so for Oliveira et al: "Do you get the sense of the world? To be occupied, have an occupation. It sends chills up my spine.'" (Cortázar 2013, 278). Uttered by Oliveira himself, the equivalence of "being occupied" with "occupation," and the fact that this has been established as the meaning of life is enough to make him shudder. Thus, the question of the collectivity of truth remains arguable.

As the foundation of Existentialism is freedom and free will, the anti-hero's rejection of legality becomes relatable. Whereas rules are necessary to avoid chaos, it inevitably limits one's freedom, and social norms create templates in order to mold individuals in a uniform manner, leading to what C calls "death of individuality" in *Aylak Adam*. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that Oliveira as well is not satisfied with the structures and forms of life that set physical and metaphysical boundaries:

> "'Underneath it all,' Ronald said, 'what bothers you is legality in all its forms. As soon as a thing begins to function well, you feel trapped. But all of us a little like that, a band of what they call failures because we don't have professions, degrees, and all that. That's why we are in Paris, man, and your famous absurdity is reduced once and for all to a kind of vague, anarchic ideal that you'll never be able to define in concrete terms.'" (Ibid, 165)

It could be interpreted that, in a way, it is the existence of order that adds to Oliveira's world-ache. The well-functioning of the world, and the avoidance of chaos through it creates the linearity and legality that turns life into an absurd series of repetitions, diminishing the sense of freedom of the individual. Moreover, they also are considered to have "failed" life for not living up to the accepted standards of everyday life. "Existential anguish is our experience of the possible as the locus of our freedom" (Flynn 2006, 67). So, the more limitations one's freedom faces, the heavier their existential angst becomes, eventually leading the way for the crisis. In terms of freedom, it could be said that Oliveira has the control of his own life and refuses to live by others' expectations, yet it becomes impossible to overcome every limitation he faces; while he is the intellectual flaneur in Paris, he turns into the circus worker in Buenos Aires.

Moreover, the existential tendencies of Oliveira are also observed through the conversations in the Serpent Club, which heavily revolve around the discussion of metaphysics. Oliveira's obsession with the notion of center, and his refusal of it bring outs a Heideggerian tone. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, Oliveira rejects the existence of a center, in beings and life alike: "To get the idea that you are the center […] is incalculably stupid. A center as illusory as it would be to try to find ubiquity. There is no center, there's a kind of continuous confluence, an undulation of matter" (Cortázar 2013, 241). Instead of the existence of a center, Oliveira's focal point in his claim is that to be is to be in a constant state of flux. This confluence, therefore, breaks down the lines of beginning and end. Concerning this, Heidegger says:

> "But in what manner *is* a beginning? A beginning is present, insofar as it remains in its coming. For the mediation that gathers the four into the center of their intimacy is a first coming. Beginning remains as advent. The beginning remains all the more, the closer it keeps itself within the possibility that it can come, and in its coming brings and sends that which it keeps to itself: the infinite relation." (Heidegger 2000, 195, italics in the original)

While in Heidegger the word "beginning" implies the presence of a center, there still is a connotation of the existence of a flux, a confluence, as Heidegger's beginning is not static; there is a constant arrival, such as in a current, creating an "infinite relation" similar to that of a confluence. Moreover, even though Oliveira is skeptical about the presence of the center, Morelli—the author whose works they read among the club, and whom Oliveira encounters later in the novel—accepts its existence yet states it might not always be encountered in a way that is expected: "The one who conquers the center wins. From that point he dominates all possibilities, and it's senseless for his adversary to insist on continuing the play. But the center might be in some side square, or even off the board" (Cortázar 2013, 555). Thus, while there might be a center, it is more of an essence than a middle point, leaving room still for the continuation of the flux. Morelli's idea of the center as the winning point of the game is also an allusion to the novel itself. While in most games, such as chess, the center is determined and apparent, in hopscotch there is no known center, it begins and ends, and the game continues through the repetition of it. Similarly, there is no exact center in one's life, it is not the middle of one's lifespan but is rather more associated with the acquisition of meaning and/or a sense of being, if it ever takes place at all. ("Existence precedes essence," Morelli said with a smile." [Ibid, 556]). The thought of a center is repelling for Oliveira as it creates a sense of unity and

order, which he refuses to abide by: “The idea of unity was worrying him because it seemed so easy to fall into the worst traps” (Ibid, 79). The traps he mentions could range anything from the illusion of comfort provided by habit to a false sense of the world. Yet, the certain thing is that apart from being the intellectual, the expat, and the Latin American, Oliveira also is the Existential anti-hero of this *contranovela*, struggling through a world of order with an unending world-ache and existential angst, which La Maga puts into words for him, as well, in a manner of diagnosis (Moran 2000, 43). “You [Oliveira] think you’re in this room, but you’re not. You’re looking at the room, you’re not in the room” (Cortázar 2013, 20). This might be interpreted as that Oliveira’s obsession with metaphysics comes to the point of alienating him, not only from the society, but of life itself, arising a crisis for real. It is just as he states: “The only dangers for [him] are metaphysical” (Ibid, 89).

3.2. The Tale of Two Cities: Flânerie in Paris vs Buenos Aires

I have previously defined a flâneur as a city stroller experiencing the continuous impressions of urban life through the act of wandering (Payne and Barbera 2010, 278). Although not defined as an idler like C, Oliveira is also considered a flâneur, mainly in the first part of the novel through his wandering around Paris. While flânerie is not supposed to be interrelated with a search or aim, the novel begins with Oliveira’s search for La Maga, however, through the chapter it can be observed that his flânerie dates back before the disappearance of her. Thus, compared to C, Oliveira as a flâneur does not base his walking solely on the coincidence of coming across a woman. Nonetheless, I have mentioned in the second chapter that the woman is only a metaphor for the search for meaning, and flânerie can be counted as a manner of rejecting the established order of things. There seems to be a similar correlation in *Rayuela*, as well. Oliveira’s special connection with Paris is a reflection of his desire to break down an apparent order through search, and a favoring of spontaneous living rather than sticking to plans: “It was about that time that I realized that searching was my symbol, the emblem of those who go out at night with nothing in mind, the motives of a destroyer of compasses” (Cortázar 2013, 7). The destruction of compasses, surely, is the breaking of the arranged system of living

through plans, timetables, and outlines. For his search to have meaning, therefore, Oliveira's wanderings have to be bereft of time itself, walking for the sake of the act itself, rather than expecting an arrival to some place: "[K]eeping track of time was difficult for Oliveira, happy *ergo* futureless" (Ibid, 23). This shows the contradictions he has with time and plans; this routine, this customary structure is an initiator of anxiety. When one does not have to mull over the anxiety of what is coming, the contentment they would receive from life is bound to increase. Although the authenticity of Oliveira's happiness is disputable, by the dismissal of "the compass," at least the burden of life could seem to be alleviated to some point. Walking is thus a form of avoiding habit for people like Oliveira "who only want[ ] to escape the ordinary routine of buses and history" (Ibid, 23).

The Latin American intellectual is a part of Oliveira's identity, just as it is Cortázar's. His gatherings with the club members revolve around art, and literature, most of the time with the readings of Morelli, whom he eventually meets later in the novel. The intellectual, however, does not suppress the flaneur's need to wander, to be outside in order to think, similar to what Nietzsche calls the outdoor thinkers: "We do not belong to those who have ideas only among books when stimulated by books. It is our habit to think outdoors—walking, leaping, climbing, dancing, preferably on lonely mountains or near the sea where even the trails become thoughtful (Nietzsche 1974, 366). Hence, it could be said that even though Oliveira becomes stimulated by art, literature, and thus books, walking still remains as a pivotal act for him in relation to the actualization of his ruminations on life, not in the mountains or near the water as Nietzsche suggests, but in the city where the "trails" of others become a stimulant.

The city is an undeniable part of the flâneur, and as Certeau has already said, walking is an indication of a lack of place (Certeau 1984, 108). Oliveira's absence of a place, however, differs from C's. C was a flâneur—or man of the crowd—in his native Istanbul, yet Oliveira is an expat, a foreigner, an outsider in Paris. For him, Paris is more than a city, it is a symbol, and perhaps a metaphor:

> "All the time I've known you, all you've done is search, but one gets the feeling that what you're looking for is right in your pocket […] [W]hat are you after with all that, Horacio?'
> 'The freedom of the city'

> ‘Here?’
> ‘It’s a metaphor. And since Paris is another metaphor […] it seems perfectly natural to me that I came here for that reason.” (Cortázar 2013, 180)

If indeed Oliveira already has what he seems to have been looking for, it only strengths the argument of walking as a metaphor, it is not about the arrival but the journey itself. For Oliveira, this metaphor seems to be for freedom; through the act of spontaneous, unplanned walking and wandering, one brings down the limitations around their freedom. In a way, the lack of a place does not completely carry a negative connotation; to be bereft of a place also means one does not have to remain dormant and stable, they are more or less free to travel as they please. What about the freedom of the city, then? How can the city be freed, and what would Oliveira gain from it? There is, of course, no definite answer to either question. My opinion is that Oliveira is looking for the freedom of the city from order, which he cannot seem to come to terms with for most of the novel: “One can live in disorder without being held by any sense of order” (Ibid, 96). Without the restriction of being held back, one can achieve, if not a full, a partial sense of freedom. And as order is the creator of rules, and therefore, restrictions, the displacement of it with disorder seems to be the solution he suggests. Thus, disorder is a means of freedom for both Paris and Oliveira alike. It could be said that the reason he relocates to Paris from Buenos Aires might be this, as well: to finally encounter the disorder he could not achieve back home.

On the other hand, Oliveira’s thoughts on arrival might also propose an opposite view: “Perhaps everything was not lost and some day, in different circumstances, after other proofs, arrival would be possible” (Ibid, 50). I have just mentioned that for the flâneur, the emphasis is on the journey, rather than the arrival. Yet here, Oliveira’s voice carries a hint of desperation. From different perspectives, this could even be read as a longing for home, and a desire to arrive home, to Buenos Aires in Oliveira’s case. “In Paris everything was Buenos Aires, and vice versa; in the most eager moments of love he would suffer loss and loneliness and relish it” (Ibid, 18). To be able to understand whether Oliveira indeed lacks a place, he has to be observed through his search in Buenos Aires, as well.

The problem is that for Oliveira, Paris is the city he inhabits as the Latin American intellectual, where he gathers with his group of sophisticated friends to have conversations about art and music, follow the trails of the city, and become lost among

the crowd, as every crowd is a means of studying the city itself (Lehan 1998, 9). Buenos Aires, however, is not quite comparable. True, homesickness is apparent in Oliveira the Expat's wandering among Parisian streets, yet when he actually goes back to Buenos Aires, flânerie stops being a common practice of his, as he begins to spend most of his time with his childhood friend Traveler, and also by working at the circus. While the orderly Paris were not able to quench the existential sufferings of Oliveira, his arrival upon Buenos Aires makes him realize that it was not as much an arrival as a departure:

> "[Oliveira] was coming to the realization that his coming back had really been his going away in more than one sense. […] At first Traveler had criticized his mania for finding everything wrong with Buenos Aires, for treating the city like a tightly girdled whore, but Oliveira explained to him and Talita that in his criticism there was so much love that only a pair of mental defectives like them would misunderstand his attacks. In the end they realized that he was right, that Oliveira could not make any hypocritical compromise with Buenos Aires, and that at the moment he was much farther away from his own country than when he had been wandering about Europe." (Ibid, 228)

Thus, it can be said that the emergence of homesickness Oliveira went through in Paris was perhaps only a state of mind caused by the way of life as an expat, and the remarkable distance between the two cities. Yet, it can at least be inferred that after all, Oliveira does indeed lack a place, he neither belongs to Buenos Aires nor Paris; in fact, even as an *étranger*, or outsider, his practices of flânerie ensure him more freedom in Paris compared to his native city, in spite of the order the latter refuses to subvert.

3.3. (De)Constructing Absurdity in *Rayuela*

The existentialist tendencies of Oliveira, combined with his search of meaning through flânerie, bring out the ultimate cause of his angst: absurdity—a social construction, caused by another socially constructed idea, habit. I have observed in the second chapter the criticism of the status quo for encouraging habit by keeping the individuals at the bay through comfort, obliging them to be satisfied with only the tip of the iceberg, deterred from asking the important questions, or inquiring about the uniformity of life. Oliveira practically shares the same feelings about habit, comfort, and the effortlessness of the acquisition of human contentment. "Habit. Everything has a longer overlap than it

should" (Cortázar 2013, 172). The repetitive circle of life, generated by habit, afflicts Oliveira's sense of life, rendering it absurd.

The construction of absurdity in the novel is through the opposites in the society, in other words, the disparity between the accustomed way of life and that of the protagonist. While for the majority, an absurd situation would be defined as something that takes place out of the ordinary, for Oliveira, it is the ordinariness itself that is in fact absurd. He explains it by giving the example of receiving your bottle of milk at your door every day, a part of the routine for many:

> "The absurdity is that it doesn't look like an absurdity. Absurdity is that you go out in the morning and find a bottle of milk on the doorstep and you are at peace because the same thing happened to you yesterday and will happen again tomorrow. It's this stagnation, this so be it, this suspicious lack of exceptions. I don't know, you see, we ought to try some other road." (Ibid, 165)

By adapting ourselves to the repetitive cycle of daily situations, we find and live by the comfort resulting from knowing what is coming next. For the ones like Oliveira, it is meaningless to rely on something like the routine, which apparently slowly takes away the element of surprise in everyday life, turning each day into the other, and taking the pleasure out of it. However, Oliveira's problem is that he is aware of this situation, as he keeps his critical distance and remains outside of it—just as La Maga claimed he is not in the room, but rather looking at it. A regular individual, on the other hand, one that is used to live by the constructions of habit would consider the lack of it as absurd, as without the sense of order would come disorder, or chaos, or at least this would be what most individuals would think. This also is another matter of absurdity, the stigma that there could either be complete order or complete disorder. By looking for another way of life, one does not have to forgo everything they have become accustomed to in daily life. The point is to space out the walls of habit, rather than breaking it down completely. "And these crises that most people think of as terrible, as absurd, I personally think they serve to show us the real absurdity, the absurdity of an ordered and calm world, with a room where different people are drinking coffee at two o'clock in the morning, without any of this having the slightest meaning unless it's hedonistic" (Ibid, 164). In a society where a universal occurrence such as existential suffering is tried to be repressed by being considered as "absurd" and "terrible" suggests the existence of such a constrained world

that it leaves no room for one to even reflect on their place, on the basis that it could disrupt the "perfect" order of the community. For Oliveira, then, this obsession with order is the primary structure within the construction of absurdity.

When the narrative of the novel is considered, the thin line between the construction and deconstruction of absurdity comes into the surface. As mentioned, Oliveira's rejection of repetition within the quotidian boundaries is his means of challenging the order, or the societal system that is based on habit, the foundation of what he considers as absurd. In the first part of the book, Oliveira's distinct way of life—through the prioritizing of his intellectual endeavors over working at a job, using flânerie as a symbol and/or metaphor for the search of meaning in life, and refusal of the typical family model—which ends his relationship with La Maga after her son comes to live with them—all can be counted as a step forward to disrupt what he acknowledges as absurd and banal. The question is, does this eventually enable him to overcome the absurdity of life? The answer would be no, as no matter what he does he cannot fully isolate himself from the society, and thus is forced to come face to face with his idea of the absurd.

To deconstruct the absurd, it is significant to remember that, first of all, what is absurd is considered as so according to the accumulation of the character's own personal experience and state of mind, binding it to subjectivity. As mentioned, what he considers as absurd could be, and most of the time is, completely different from the understanding of absurdity by a regular individual. Moreover, his own opinions and narrative are layered. As Derrida says, narrative in itself doubles through the same narrator: "There is the double narrative, the narrative of the vision enclosed in the general narrative carried on by the same narrator. The line that separates the enclosed narrative from the other—marks the upper edge of a space that will never be closed" (Derrida 1979, 85-86). This might mean that there is more than one side to Oliveira's notions on absurdity. Above or under his words imprinted in the book could lie a different interpretation of the narrative through the unclosed "space" in it. To put it another way, Oliveira might denounce others' as banal and limited for not—even—trying to escape the boundaries of their comfort zone, name the whole process as absurd and exclude himself from it to some point. Yet, he is also aware of the fact that his efforts remain futile as one person cannot break down an established order by themselves, especially by rejecting it. There emerges another sense of absurdity. If it is apparent that there is practically no way to escape life's vicious

cycle, to make oneself suffer through isolation suggests also an absurd undertone. It makes almost no difference to Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus;* no matter how hard Sisyphus might push up the boulder; there is no way he can break down what is established. The futility of either one's actions are still open to debate, but the fact that in the end little changes is more or less settled. Upon this, the meaning and definition of absurdity deconstructs itself, and Oliveira is caught in the loop through his own rejection of what he calls absurd.

Through Oliveira's approach against absurdity, the reattribution of meaning to it becomes clearer. His inescapable rejection of the absurdity within daily life turns his own action into an absurd one, thus creating a loop and failing his actual goal of ridding himself of it. It is why he claims that the unique way of escaping the loop of absurdity is to live according to it. "Only by living absurdly is it possible to break out of this infinite absurdity" (Cortázar 2013, 101).

Then, could it be said that as his actions or way of living sync with the others—albeit through different intentions—he begins to "fit" into the society, upon the sharing of a similar pattern of living? It is questionable, first of all because the constitution of a community upon the sharing of similar ideals turns the definition of the ideal itself into an ambiguous one (Irzık 2017, 80). Is the ideal the usual way of life that revolves around routine and habit, or is it the sense of order whose disruption that many are afraid of? In a way, it is almost impossible to attain unanimity on this, which also deconstructs the stereotypes of the ideal society. Oliveira's decision of living absurdly is not to attain this claimed ideal in the society, but to escape the meaningless of it. Secondly, it is also ambiguous what exactly he means by "living absurdly," as the meaning is subjective. According to his definition of the absurd, it would mean to live like everybody else, through the repetitive cycle of everyday life. From the perspective of others', it would signify a way of living that is out of the "ordinary," some nonsensical, and even perhaps, ridiculous existence. Which one Oliveira refers to, we do not know, perhaps neither does he, although he explains it as a "different way" of living—which barely makes a difference as the meaning every person would attain to difference would vary: "Underneath it all we could be what we are on the surface […] but we would have to live in a different way. And what does it mean to live in a different way? Maybe to live absurdly in order to do away with the absurd" (Ibid, 99). Here again, the absurd way of

living is open to interpretation, and thus is constantly deconstructed and reconstructed. My personal opinion is that Oliveira refers to living according to habit—the thing he despises thoroughly—so as to at least rid himself of the absurdity. Still, the point of deconstruction is to eliminate the imposition of one single interpretation, therefore, Oliveira's absurd way of living could also be interpreted in another manner. However, when taken into consideration his life upon his return the Buenos Aires, the most striking change he goes through is, I believe, employment. He begins to work at a circus with his childhood friend Traveler, and while it cannot be fully said that it is what others would call as an "ideal" or at least a preferable job, there is a striking shift from the bohemian lifestyle of the intellectual flâneur in Paris to this. Thus, the underlying meaning behind his absurd way of living could indeed be living according to the status quo.

Similarly, Henry Lefebvre's analysis of the intellectuals' degradation of everyday life reminds one of the multiple layers of absurdity, and how the meaning changes according to the subject: "Intellectuals, 'cultivated' men, are convinced in advance (why?) that everyday life has only triviality to offer. In fact, this belief plays an important role in so-called 'existential' philosophy, which condemns all non-metaphysical life to triviality and inauthenticity" (Lefebvre 1991, 239). Lefebvre denounces both the ideals of existentialism and that of intellectuals, claiming that they look down on everyday life with the imposition that it is nothing but tedious, offering little to none for the "cultivation" of beings. From his perspective, then, everyday life would not be—at least as much as Oliveira considers it—so absurd, breaking down the established norms of absurdity again.

Oliveira does bring forward the claim of living absurdly to escape from it, yet the question remains whether it works or not. When looked into his attempt at it, mainly through his acquisition of a job, the circus does not last and is turned into an asylum in the end, where, this time, Oliveira and his friends begin to work. The conversion of his workplace to an asylum can be interpreted as an early warning of his approaching madness. In fact, as the time passes Oliveira's mental stability begins to deteriorate, to the point that he becomes delusional and thinks Talita, Traveler's wife, is actually La Maga, whom he has not seen since her disappearance in Paris: "I know she's Talita, but a while ago she was La Maga. She's two people, just like us." "'They call that being crazy,' Traveler said." (Ibid, 346). It is open to interpretation, and it can be said that Oliveira's considering Traveler as his

doppelganger might not sound completely mad, yet the fact that Oliveira's adopting an absurd lifestyle is followed by an upcoming madness is hard to miss. It might signify the impossibility of escaping from absurdity, even when one enters it. Plus, the attempted suicide of Oliveira also implies the unattainability of a total liberation, as well as bringing it down to the two choices of madness and suicide, just as it was in *Aylak Adam*. On the other hand, it is a suicide *attempt*, therefore is barely a solution, and the effectiveness of madness in the face of absurdity is also dubious as they seem to have more of a cause and effect relationship. Is salvation completely impossible, then? Probably, yes. Yet, while the achievement of full liberation from the absurdity of daily life might be unattainable, it could be intercepted to some point. One way to do it could be given by means of art, and especially literature: "Reading is, then, always a process in which there are pauses during which 'everyday life' intervenes" (Franco 1980, 109). My claim is that if the act of reading is intervened by everyday life, it could also be vice versa: reading could intervene and create pauses from the daily life, as well. Considering the Serpent Club's relationship with literature, especially through the readings of Morelli, this can pass as a valid claim. And upon this comes the realization that perhaps they were able to intervene the absurdity of life at some point, and the complete riddance of absurdity was not an absolute necessity: "[T]hey had already let Sunday afternoon and evening slip by reading, listening to records, getting up alternately to warm up some coffee or prepare some mate" (Cortázar 2013, 16).

4. CONCLUSION

"The Canon, a word religious in its origin, has become a choice among texts struggling with one another for survival, whether you interpret the choice as being made by dominant social groups, institutions of educations, [or] traditions of criticism […]" (Bloom 1995, 20). This quotation by Harold Bloom was one of the starting points of this thesis. Growing up reading both canonical and non-canonical works, the designation of what is canon has always been a point of interest and intrigue for me. Thus, I aimed to combine two works from two parts of the world which would be considered as the periphery of "canon," Turkey and Latin America. While reading *Rayuela* for the first time, I found the similarities it carried to *Aylak Adam* quite astonishing, as the two authors probably had never heard of each other during their lifetimes even though they were contemporaries. This, of course, would not be the issue if their works were considered as canon. While Cortázar is internationally much more famous and well-known compared to Atılgan, and his work is included through the syllabi around the world, his canonicity is still open to debate compared to Western authors such as Joyce, Woolf, or Faulkner. This naturally brings forward the debate of geography, and how Eurocentrism determines what passes as canon. By bringing forward a comparison of a Turkish and an Argentine text, I, first of all, aimed to analyze how mainstream theories—Existentialism in this context—travels to the periphery and is implemented and understood there. As the ambiance of both novels is heavily existentialist, a factor caused by the era they were written in, when especially French Existentialism was at its peak, I analyzed the apparent existential angst of the characters, especially C's, through the terms and notions of some of the leading existentialist philosophers, mainly Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. For Oliveira, I focused more on his intellectual identity, correlating it with Cortázar's own, and how it is reflected as his apparent existential angst in the novel. I examined flânerie as an extension of this Existentialism in both characters, as a means of search for meaning, but also of the rejection of the ordinary, the habitual. In terms of how everyday life is

interpreted as absurd by both C and Oliveira, I utilized, again, Camus' thoughts on absurdity related to repetition and applied it into the routine of daily life. Especially in the third chapter where I examined *Rayuela,* I tried to deconstruct the understanding of "absurdity" and the absurd, and how there are more than one side to it.

While this thesis mainly focuses on the similarities between the two novels, one significant, and challenging, difference remains: the structure. As mentioned before, in *Rayuela,* Cortázar brings forward a revolutionary structure. It is not only the non-linearity that makes Rayuela innovative, as that was preceded by a few others, but the "choice" it offers to the reader. The table of instructions at the beginning of the novel is a unique one, it draws a structure for the reader but leaves it open for them to choose which path to follow, as well, by disregarding the table. Thus, this whole structure of the novel, in a way, is related to Existentialism itself. The free will of the reader is apparent, they can either follow it or choose an already-drawn one for themselves, which parallels to the standpoint of the characters in both novels. While C and Oliveira disregard the "table of instructions" of the status quo on life, the others seem to find comfort in following it, as it is simpler and easier. This situation also relates to Søren Kierkegaard's *Either/Or,* a major work of Existential philosophy, in which he focuses on the question of marriage through a character, such as C and Oliveira, that rejects it. The title of the book is also significant, as through the table of instructions the reader is given their own "either/or." They can *either* follow Cortázar, *or* their own free will. Cortázar's novel, therefore, differentiates itself from others, and from *Aylak Adam,* as well, by its offer of free will to the reader.

This thesis was also meant to be a means of demonstrating how Existentialism as an abstract notion is formed and shaped within the novels. While both Atılgan and Cortázar were affiliated with Existentialism as a movement and an idea, the reflection of it within the novels cannot be said to be completely affirmative. That is to say, both C and Oliveira do suffer from an existential angst and are in favor of free will to shape their own path, yet the application of this in the novels appears to be limited. The distinctness of both characters, as well as the discrepancy between their ideals and that of the societies they live in tend to alienate them, to the point of complete solitude at some level. The fact that they both reach to the verge of madness and suicide makes one question whether there is also a hint of criticism of Existentialism, as well. They are meant to be the anti, *ayrıkı*,

contra heroes, yet at some point their belief in free will is shaken, as well, as it can be seen when Oliveira partially forgoes his lifestyle as an intellectual flâneur upon his return to Buenos Aires, and when C begins a relationship with Ayşe again, even though he knows she is not the woman he had been looking for. The end of the both novels seems to reflect this shaken belief in the concrete results of abstract notions of Existentialism. While free will is what grants freedom and originality to each individual, it does make the reader question whether it is always for the better.

My ultimate goal was to demonstrate that even though Atılgan and Cortázar went through quite different experiences in life, the universality of literature and philosophy was reflected through the similarities in their works. It cannot be said that *Aylak Adam* and *Rayuela* were inspired by one another, as the authors were oblivious to each other, yet both were inspired by the canons of literature and philosophy, and thus brought forward one Turkish and one Argentine protagonist who appear not too different from each other, after all. Although the novels differ from one another from length to structure, the sufferings of the characters relate to one another's, as well as a coinciding pattern in their stories, both following search for meaning through flânerie, refusal of habit and absurdity, experimenting with the absurd way of living, madness, and a suicide attempt. Oliveira says in *Rayuela* that he sees Traveler as his doppelganger, yet in my honest opinion C suits that role better.

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